

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

In the matter of:

MEETING FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Pages: 1 through 148

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HERITAGE REPORTING CORPORATION

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BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

* * * * *

In the matter of:

MEETING FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

ST-101, Main Auditorium
Penn Valley Community College
3201 Southwest Trafficway
Kansas City, Missouri

Thursday,
August 3, 2000

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m.

PRESIDING:

Julie Paradis
Deputy Undersecretary
Food and Nutrition Service

ALSO PRESENT:

Bill Ludwig
Administrator
Mountain Plains Regional Office

Sam Chambers
Administrator
Food and Nutrition Service

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. PARADIS: Good afternoon. Thank you all so
3 much for coming here this afternoon. We're excited.

4 My name is Julie Paradis. I'm the Deputy
5 Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services at
6 that U.S. Department of Agriculture. And as you all know,
7 we help states and, in some instances, counties administer
8 the Food Stamp Program.

9 And we're delighted to be here this afternoon to
10 hear from you how we might improve this truly wonderful
11 program.

12 I'd like take this opportunity to thank Penn
13 Valley Community College for working with us to give us the
14 opportunity to have this conversation this day in this
15 wonderful facility.

16 And I'm delighted to see that we've got as many
17 people turned out, and I know that there are more people
18 that are going to be coming.

19 As you can see, we've got two microphones down
20 front. So after we've sort of done our preliminary and made
21 some remarks, we'll look forward to people who have
22 something to share with us coming down and using these two
23 microphones.

24 We're also going to be taking comments from
25 people who will be calling in on the telephone who, for

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1 whatever reason, weren't able to get to Kansas City today.
2 And we wanted to make sure that we gave everyone in the
3 country the opportunity to be with us.

4 Not only do I want to thank Penn Valley Community
5 College, but I also want to thank our Mountain Plains
6 regional office.

7 You know, the Food and Nutrition Service is
8 divided up into seven regions. We are in the Mountain
9 Plains regional office here in Kansas City.

10 Bill Ludwig, the administrator of the regional
11 office with a good number of his staff who helped pull all
12 this together. And Bill, I want to thank you so much for
13 doing that. And please let your staff know how much it
14 means to us.

15 The Undersecretary, Shirley Watkins, had
16 originally planned on being here today. In fact, she feels
17 these conversations are so critically important that she
18 cleared her schedule to be able to attend all seven of the
19 meetings that we're having.

20 But a few weeks ago, the Secretary of Agriculture
21 asked Shirley if she would accompany him on a trip he was
22 making to Africa.

23 And you don't say no to that kind of an
24 opportunity. You don't say no when the Secretary says that
25 it would really be important to accompany him on such a

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1 trip. So she left for Africa on Saturday and won't be back
2 until next Wednesday. So she asked me to please sit in for
3 her.

4 So both Shirley and I and the Administrator the
5 Food and Service, Sam Chambers, who is here today, feel it's
6 very important that you all understand that our very most
7 senior people feel that this is so important that we wanted
8 to be with you. So I am delighted to be here today.

9 The Food Stamp Program, as you know, is the
10 cornerstone of our nutrition assistance network around the
11 country.

12 And as we move into this new century, we want to
13 make sure that it's responsive and appropriate for the time
14 and it's clients. And in this post-Welfare Reform era, I
15 think we are understanding increasingly that we need to make
16 some changes to this program.

17 We're here to listen to you today. This isn't
18 necessarily going to be a dialogue. We want to take all of
19 your comments. They will be transcribed. And so everyone
20 who presents today will have their remarks transcribed.

21 And we will be putting those transcripts up on
22 our web page so that everyone in the country will have the
23 opportunity to hear your observations.

24 Now, it's critical that we get your input so that
25 those of us who sit inside the Beltway trying to determine

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1 what we need to do over the next couple years to improve
2 upon this program aren't doing it in a vacuum. We greatly
3 value your input to this discussion.

4 Before we get underway, though, I'd like to spend
5 just a few minutes describing the purpose, goals, and next
6 steps. And I've tried to put into perspective the program's
7 history and functions.

8 Many of you in this room know this, but there may
9 be some who don't. I think a brief overview would be
10 helpful to kind of frame our conversation today.

11 You know, the Food Stamp Program had its
12 beginnings as far back as the Depression. And I'm not sure
13 how many of you might have known that.

14 The original intent, as stated in the current
15 Food Stamp Act, was "to strengthen the agricultural economy,
16 achieve a more effective use of food abundances, and to
17 provide for improved levels of nutrition among low income
18 households."

19 The program we know today began as a pilot
20 project in 1961, and it was made permanent in 1964.

21 The program expanded dramatically after 1974,
22 when Congress required all states to make food stamps
23 available to low income households. That was the first time
24 that states were required to participate in this program.

25 And then, as you know, the Food Stamp Act of 1977

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1 made significant changes in program regulations, tightened
2 eligibility criteria and administration, and removed that
3 old requirement that food stamps be purchased by recipients.

4 And since then the program has grown. It reached
5 an all-time high of almost 28 million participants in March
6 of 1994. The current participation level is around 20

7 million per month and, as many of you know, it's dropping.

8 Food stamp households are a diverse and wide
9 ranging group. They represent a broad cross-section of the
10 nation's low income population.

11 For example, over half of the recipients are
12 children, over half. Another 8 percent are age 60 or older.

13 The majority of households do not receive TANF
14 benefits. They receive cash assistance from Supplemental
15 Security Income, that's SSI; from Social Security, and from
16 State General Assistance. Nine percent have absolutely no
17 income of any kind whatsoever.

18 Twenty-six percent of recipients work, and for
19 these households those earnings are the primary source of
20 family income.

21 But only 10 percent of the working families make
22 enough to put them above the poverty line, and 37 percent of
23 the working families are at or below the poverty line.

24 The average food stamp household has only \$118 in
25 countable resources. That's including vehicles and checking

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1 and savings accounts.

2 The average food stamp household is small, around
3 2.4 people. However, households with children are
4 relatively large, averaging 3.3 members. Households, of
5 course, with elderly participants were smaller, with an
6 average of 1.3 members.

7 Now, as many of you know, we recently co-hosted
8 with HHS the National Nutrition Summit in Washington, D.C.
9 at the end of May.

10 Among the events were two breakout sessions where
11 people had a chance to discuss issues in more depth and
12 listen to a variety of speakers.

13 At the first session, entitled, The Face of
14 Hunger in America, one of our guests was Sharon Thornberry,
15 a former WIC and food stamp recipient. And let me tell you
16 what she said: "These programs" -- she was talking about
17 food stamps and WIC. "These programs did not make us
18 dependent; they helped us to succeed."

19 I think that's something that we all need to
20 really keep in mind as we talk about Welfare Reform and what
21 it was intended to do.

22 Sharon is now self-reliant, she is self-
23 sufficient, she is confident and proud of her children, and
24 she owes her success, she believes, to the helping hand she
25 and her family got from the Food Stamp Program. I think as

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1 we go through these discussions we need to keep her words in
2 mind.

3 We have to make sure that the Food Stamp Program
4 continues to help families succeed, and we're hoping that
5 the suggestions we're going to hear from all of you today
6 will be key.

7 Now, you should all have the handouts, I hope,
8 that as you came in this afternoon, which contain detailed
9 information about the program, far more than I've been able
10 to give you this afternoon. But I just want to highlight a
11 few things that are in that packet.

12 The Food Stamp Program Guiding Principles were
13 developed a couple years ago. They're an important summary
14 of what we believe the program should be and how it should
15 function.

16 When you take a look at the principles, bear in
17 mind that "improved nutritional well-being is the ultimate
18 measure of success in the fight to reduce hunger and improve
19 nutrition."

20 This principle is truly the foundation of the
21 program and the heart of the original intent of the framers
22 of the Act. It's the core of why I work here and why it's
23 so critical that we have your participation in this series
24 of conversations.

25 And one of the reasons that we're doing this, one

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1 of the primary reasons, quite frankly, is because we've got
2 food stamp reauthorization coming up in 2002, as you know.

3 It's especially important that we take advantage
4 of that opportunity to do everything we can to make the
5 program as strong and responsive as we all know it can be.

6 I truly do believe that 2002 will present us with
7 the best opportunity since 1977 to make truly dramatic and
8 significant improvements in this wonderful program.

9 As you may know, since we feel these
10 conversations are so important and that we need to get input
11 from a variety of people, we've been having these
12 conversations in major cities around the country.

13 We started out in Washington, we went to Atlanta
14 and New York City. Last week we were in Chicago. Today
15 we're here in Kansas City. And before the end of August,
16 we'll have been in Dallas and Los Angeles.

17 Just to let you know, we are truly here to
18 listen. So again I thank you all for being here.

19 And I'm going to turn the mic over to Sam
20 Chambers, the Food and Nutrition Regional -- not Regional
21 Administrator -- the Administrator, who is going to sort of
22 give you a little bit of the housekeeping details. And then
23 we'll be ready to go. Sam.

24 MR. CHAMBERS: Good afternoon. I'd also like to
25 join with Julie in representing Ms. Watkins and thanking you

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1 all for your active participation. We've brought a lot of
2 paper, and we also are prepared to have all of your remarks
3 transcribed, as you see the transcriber here to my left.

4 As Julie indicated, we do want your active
5 participation. We have a methodology by which we will keep
6 track of and try to ensure that everybody who has come here
7 prepared to make comments is able to do that.

8 We would ask that you use those microphones that
9 are right here in front of us.

10 I understand we also have a separate microphone,
11 a hand-held microphone, that should be available for those
12 individuals who are unable to get to those two mics.

13 So if you will let someone know that you need one
14 of those mics when it's your turn, we will make certain that
15 you have that available to you.

16 We also would like for those of you who have
17 written comments and would like to leave those written
18 comments with us to leave those with one of our staff who
19 are out at the registration area.

20 And finally, for those of you who have other
21 thoughts that come to mind after this session, and you would
22 like to make those comments known to us or have that
23 information shared with us, we would ask that you send it to
24 our national office, which is located in Alexandria,
25 Virginia.

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1 The address is available on our Website, and if
2 you would like to, we can give you that address before you
3 leave today.

4 So we are here, and we will be, as Julie said
5 before, as long as we need to be here to hear your comments
6 and input. So thank you very much. Julie.

7 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Sam. Before we go to
8 the first speaker who registered this afternoon, we've got a
9 caller on the line, I'm told. And so I think we'll go ahead
10 and start with that caller, and we're ready to do that.

11 I would ask, Caller, if you could tell us,
12 please, your name and where you're from. And then, we look
13 forward to hearing your comments.

14 MS. SULA: Hello.

15 MS. PARADIS: Yes. Caller, go ahead, please.
16 Give us your name, please, and where you're from.

17 MS. SULA: My name is Susan Sula [phonetic], and
18 I am the interim Executive Director of [inaudible]. Are you
19 able to hear me okay?

20 MS. PARADIS: Yes. We hear you great, Susan.

21 MS. SULA: Okay. Well, I want [inaudible]. I
22 appreciate you making time for this.

23 In Utah, we are very concerned about the way the
24 Food Stamp Program has been operated. [Inaudible].

25 I feel that the Food Stamp Program has great

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1 value. I also has missed a lot of families. And in Utah,
2 the [inaudible] actually give the purpose of the program.

3 I would also like to see the program be more
4 identified with the children. In your opening comments, you
5 said that over half of the food stamps go to children. And
6 that really would be wonderful to identify it as being a
7 program that helps support the children in the country.

8 We also think the program definitely needs to be
9 improved. [Inaudible]. The Food Stamp Program needs to be
10 improved.

11 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Susan. We very much
12 appreciate your comments.

13 MS. SULA: Oh, thank you.

14 MS. PARADIS: All right. Our first speaker here
15 this afternoon is Joel Ferber.

16 MR. FERBER: Thank you. Thank you for inviting
17 us to testify here today. My name is Joel Ferber. I'm an
18 attorney with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri.

19 My colleague, Laura Brink, and I are going to be
20 testifying about some various issues relating to food stamp
21 access. And we've submitted detailed written testimony.

22 Legal Services of Eastern Missouri has a long
23 history of advocacy on food stamp access issues, including
24 individual case advocacy, policy advocacy, and litigation to
25 enforce the rights of food stamp recipients.

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1 We represent community based organizations such
2 as ROW and Southside Welfare Rights Organization, as well as
3 numerous individual clients.

4 We are very concerned about the food stamp
5 participation decline, which is well documented, about 28
6 percent in Missouri since March 1994, along with a pretty
7 serious food insecurity rate in this state.

8 The TANF studies, including Missouri, show that
9 folks who should be eligible for food stamps are not getting
10 them when they go to work and that many people -- the Urban
11 Institute's study showed that about 33 percent of the people
12 leaving Welfare did not have enough food to eat and were
13 skipping meals.

14 In terms of program access, the entitlement
15 structure, the overall structure of the program, uniform
16 eligibility and benefits standards must be maintained.

17 While states may want flexibility, any further
18 erosion of the Food Stamp Program in that manner will just
19 cause more problems and more barriers. In this regard,
20 recipient protections that flow from that status be
21 maintained and reinforced.

22 We're very concerned about proposed USDA
23 regulations that would limit access, important protections
24 such as the right to apply. States are required to
25 encourage recipients to apply on the day they contact the

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1 Food Stamp office, a right that's not very much honored in
2 states.

3 Protections against excessive verification
4 practices must be retained and strengthened.

5 In terms of program access, one of the biggest
6 issues we see is short certification periods. We're very
7 concerned about the delays and denials of nutrition
8 assistance resulting from three-month certification periods.

9 In Missouri, for example, the proportion of
10 children required to apply every three months grew from 2
11 percent to 92 percent from 1994 to 1998. And during that
12 same time, participation dropped about 22 percent in the
13 state, and we don't think it's a coincidence.

14 We appreciate some of the measures USDA has taken
15 with the new options available to states. Yet, those
16 options are not necessarily being translated into action in
17 states like Missouri when they get filtered through the
18 regional office. And our state continually cites USDA as a
19 barrier to moving to more progressive options.

20 So we think minimum certification periods of at
21 least 12 months need to be part of what USDA tries to
22 achieve on reauthorization.

23 Quality control and management evaluation systems
24 need to be reformed. The QC system is always cited as a
25 reason for these restrictive practices that are barriers to

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1 access. We need an ME system or a QC system that has some
2 teeth with regard to issues of program access.

3 We don't have detailed reinvestment agreements
4 between states and USDA on what the states are going to do
5 to improve access, on the right to apply, the right to
6 expedited service.

7 The only recourse for beneficiaries in this area
8 is litigation. Our only avenue is a court injunction.

9 We need a real systemic response to USDA, some
10 standards with teeth in them to monitor program access, just
11 like USDA is inclined to do in the areas of claims and error
12 prevention.

13 We appreciate the access guide, but when
14 juxtaposed against error prevention techniques, claims
15 collection techniques, it's not enough.

16 The rest of the issues are covered in our written
17 testimony. We would just, as a last point, say that
18 transitional food stamps for working families would be
19 another way to improve access to families moving from
20 Welfare to work.

21 And I thank you again for the opportunity to
22 testify. And my colleague, Laura Brink, will make the
23 remainder of our points. Thank you.

24 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Joel. Laura.

25 MS. BRINK: Good afternoon. Thank you for the

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1 opportunity.

2 Several issues relating to claims that we see a
3 lot of are USDA's pressure to collect over-issuances,
4 especially right now, with agency error overpayments.

5 USDA should waive repayments of agency error
6 overpayments. There's really no incentive for caseworkers
7 to calculate benefits correctly when they know that even
8 agency error claims are being collected.

9 The state agencies are attempting to collect
10 overpayments sometimes going back as far as ten years,
11 although they might find the error, as they should, rather
12 quickly. But by the time they get around to actually going
13 through the process of collecting, it could be ten years
14 down the road.

15 We've seen a lady who was getting -- got on her
16 feet to finally get a car, buy a car. And she was going to
17 use her tax refund, her earned income tax credit, for that,
18 and that was intercepted. And it was ten-year-old debt to
19 another state.

20 And we're just seeing a lot of serious
21 inflictions of and setbacks to families who are complying
22 with the food stamp rules. These families don't have funds
23 to make up for agency's errors, and it really impedes the
24 food stamp recipients' transition from Welfare to work.

25 Related to the claims issues, the 8th Circuit has

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1 held that due process requires that the agency inform
2 families in their agency error overpayment notices that the
3 agency has the discretion to waive, reduce, or settle a
4 claim.

5 And USDA should, at the very least, incorporate
6 these requirements in its regulations, and further, the USDA
7 should follow Social Security's lead and actually require
8 waivers based on financial hardship and lack of fault.

9 MS. PARADIS: Laura, before you continue, I'm
10 going to ask you to move a little bit closer to the mic. I
11 think we're going to have to figure this out. But I'm told
12 that the closer we are to the mic the less likely we are to
13 get that feedback. Thanks.

14 MS. BRINK: Okay. We recognize that these
15 provisions for waivers are allowable under existing law, but
16 states are unlikely to do anything without direct
17 requirement by the USDA.

18 And with regard to claims, also, we're seeing
19 trafficking, quote, unquote, issues taken up by the states
20 that really -- they're bringing claims based on supposed
21 trafficking issues that are really unrelated to any actual
22 overpayments, but they're being called overpayment cases.

23 And the states are attempting to disqualify
24 households based on transaction profiles that do not prove
25 trafficking offenses.

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1 Related again to that is the EBT fraud issues
2 that we see. USDA should revisit the impact of fraud
3 prevention techniques on food stamp participation.

4 Missouri is focusing exclusively on the low
5 income individuals instead of retailers.

6 The EBT profiling is targeting, investigating,
7 and harassing recipients based on shopping patterns and
8 profiles, which results in discrimination to poor and
9 minority people.

10 It invades their privacy, again, improper
11 disqualification hearings where there's really no evidence,
12 and even -- and a lot of people are not getting to the
13 hearings. In fact, they're being asked to sign a waiver.

14 And a lot of times that waiver says that they've
15 committed fraud, and they don't know enough to know the
16 difference, that they really have not committed fraud. And
17 they are waiving their right to food stamps for a long
18 period of time.

19 With regard to some proposed changes in the
20 regulations, it's real important that the documentary
21 evidence standard and the clear and convincing evidence
22 standard are not taken away as it is proposed to do in the
23 proposed regulations.

24 And one other final point. The simplification of
25 the Food Stamp Program we know is looked at by states and

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1 USDA.

2 We would just ask that, in efforts to simplify
3 the program, to keep in mind the shelter deduction and the
4 medical expense deduction. For many people these deductions
5 are very helpful and make them eligible for the Food Stamp
6 Program.

7 There is no entitlement to any subsidized
8 housing, and the shelter deduction is so valuable to so many
9 people.

10 Thank you very much. The rest of our comments
11 are in our written testimony.

12 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Laura. Our next
13 presenter is David Tushaus. Forgive me if I mangle the
14 pronunciation of some of these names.

15 MR. TUSHAUS: That's quite all right. I'm used
16 to it.

17 MS. PARADIS: David, you're a little taller, so
18 you're going to present a challenge to us with -- and I am
19 not doing it right, either. We need to really speak right
20 into the microphone.

21 MR. TUSHAUS: I'll give it a shot.

22 MS. PARADIS: Thank you.

23 MR. TUSHAUS: My name is David Tushaus. I'm a
24 professor of legal studies, but I'm also an attorney who has
25 represented low income individuals for the last 15 years.

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1 And I want to bring up a couple of points that
2 are related to my previous representation.

3 One is the automobile resource limit for food
4 stamps. That has created a serious problem for many
5 individuals trying to get on food stamps or stay on food
6 stamps.

7 I'm reminded of several clients who were laid off
8 of work because of plant closings in the northwest Missouri
9 area where I work. They couldn't get on food stamps simply
10 because they wanted to hold on to the reliable
11 transportation that they had so that they could look for
12 work, find work, and continue to commute to a new job.

13 Vehicle limitations are antitheses to Welfare to
14 work, and they should be eliminated, much like Missouri has
15 eliminated them in its TANF Program.

16 Another concern I have is with food stamp
17 limitations for populations that were singled out in the
18 Welfare Reform of 1996, specifically individuals.

19 Food stamps are one of the few, if not only,
20 benefits available to many individuals who are not disabled.
21 Yes. These individuals need to be encouraged to go to work,
22 but not at the price of taking them off of food stamps after
23 a time limitation.

24 Immigrants are denied food stamps when, you know,
25 they are in this country lawfully. They should not be

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1 singled out as a group that does not receive food stamps.

2 And you know, a group that maybe isn't very
3 sympathetic to many people, convicted felons of drug use,
4 they are kept from getting food stamps and should not be.
5 They have paid their price presumably by doing time in jail,
6 and they have a right to a fresh start. Food stamps can
7 help them get that fresh start.

8 They were singled out in the '96 legislation, and
9 they should be provided an opportunity, by a change in
10 legislation, to get back into the Food Stamp Program so that
11 they can have that one small safety net for that very
12 necessary, basic need, which is food.

13 That is the extent of the oral comments I'd like
14 to make. I also submitted some written testimony. Thank
15 you.

16 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much, David. The
17 next presenter is Richard Palmer.

18 MR. PALMER: Good afternoon. I'm Richard Palmer,
19 and I'm with Fleming Companies. We're a supplier at over
20 3,000 supermarkets and convenience stores in 41 states.

21 And I'm also a member of the Food Marketing
22 Institute's Electronic Payment Services Committee.

23 And the items I'd like to address today are the
24 things that we experienced when we first went into food
25 stamps. And as we've made the recent change in processors

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1 for electronic food stamps, for the EBT, we want to be sure
2 that we don't experience these same problems as we move
3 forward in 2002.

4 In the last three months, many of our stores have
5 had to turn customers away because of the large outages in
6 EBT. We also were not able to get through on the voice
7 response unit because of the volume of the outages.

8 And then, when we could not process at the front
9 end, we had to take the food stamp customer out of the lane
10 to a customer service booth, try to get an authorization,
11 and when we couldn't, those people left their groceries,
12 went home.

13 And we're worried, because how many little kids
14 went hungry because the processor was down and we couldn't
15 sell them groceries?

16 And we encountered a lot of costs with this. The
17 retailers would have to put the groceries back. There would
18 be carts left in the aisle, and we lost a lot of perishable
19 product.

20 And the recipients don't understand that this is
21 not the retailer's fault. They're blaming the retailer for
22 this outage that he can't supply them with groceries, and
23 the retailers are suffering a loss of consumer confidence.

24 And then, we've also had the problem that, after
25 the system came back up, a transaction may have went to the

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1 processor, but it did not get back to the store, so it timed
2 out. And that food stamp recipient had funds taken out of
3 their account, but they did not get any groceries for it.

4 And when they went back to the store, the
5 retailer had credited it back to their food stamp account.
6 It takes several weeks for that money to hit that
7 recipient's account. So they could go 30 days, close to it,
8 being short on funds.

9 And with outages of this type, would appreciate
10 in the new regulations that come out that there are
11 emergency voucher procedures that we can use with this type
12 of outage.

13 And as we move forward to new programs, we ask
14 that the costs of these programs not be passed on to the
15 retailers, because sooner or later, if the cost is passed on
16 to the retailers, it's passed on to the recipients, and
17 their benefit level goes down, they're not getting their
18 money's worth of what they should be.

19 And I think as we all work together on this new
20 project, I think we'll come up with a much better system for
21 everybody involved. Thank you.

22 MS. PARADIS: Richard, before you leave the
23 microphone, just for the record, can you tell us, please,
24 what your service area is? Which states do you work in, or
25 is it nationwide?

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1 MR. PALMER: It's 41 states.

2 MS. PARADIS: Okay. So certainly you cover the
3 states in this region as well as others.

4 MR. PALMER: Right. Missouri, and everything
5 except the far Northeast, we pretty much have a presence in.

6 MS. PARADIS: Great. Thank you.

7 Our next presenter is Ron Frost, I believe.

8 MR. FROST: Good afternoon, and thank you for
9 this opportunity to talk about the Food Stamp Program.

10 I'm Ron Frost, Director of the Southwest Region
11 for the Food Marketing Institute.

12 FMI is a trade association, and we represent more
13 than 1,500 food retailers and wholesalers throughout the
14 United States.

15 Our domestic members, in fact, operate more than
16 21,000 supermarkets throughout the United States, and that
17 represents more than almost -- well over \$200 billion in
18 grocery sales, which is more than half of all the grocery
19 sales in the United States.

20 The Food Stamp Program has been a good
21 partnership between retailers and the recipients and the
22 Government for more than 35 years. And certainly we
23 participate in that and work together successfully. And
24 together we've helped alleviate the hunger problem for many
25 American families.

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1 Many FMI members were involved in EBT since its
2 implementation over ten years ago. And today EBT is a
3 reality because we were able to work together.

4 In a majority of states, Citibank has been hired
5 as the primary processor of benefits. And as you know, they
6 recently changed subcontractors from Deluxe Data to EDS.

7 And this conversion has caused big problems for many of our
8 members, and particularly the recipients in the grocery
9 stores.

10 The problems that I'm talking about are the down
11 times or the system outages that Richard just mentioned.
12 They've plagued the EBT system in many parts of the country.

13 In fact, outages recently took place over several
14 days in May, June, and July. And in fact, there was just an
15 outage again this week, Tuesday, in the New York area.

16 And the bottom line is, as Richard said, EBT
17 recipients have to leave the store without food because of
18 the constant outages. And when the system goes down, they
19 leave the store.

20 And as he said, in some cases, the voice
21 authorization line is constantly busy, and we can't get
22 through, and the store clerks aren't able to verbally
23 process the transaction.

24 I'd like to read an excerpt from a letter that a
25 grocery store manager wrote to FMI just recently.

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1 "Yesterday the system went down in every state in
2 which we operate from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., came up for 1-
3 1/2 hours, and then went down for the remainder of the
4 night. This morning the system went down at 9:30 a.m.

5 "I personally unloaded 27 full carts yesterday
6 left by disgruntled customers. This represents only a small
7 number of orders left behind by customers.

8 "This is a lose-lose situation for everybody.
9 Recipients left without food, and we lost customers who
10 probably blame us for the outages and in the future will
11 shop elsewhere."

12 And another problem that occurs as a result of
13 the outage are the time-out reversals that Richard
14 mentioned. And that's a term where they have to leave the
15 store without food, but yet they are billed for it or docked
16 for it, and they don't realize it until maybe weeks later.
17 And sometimes it takes up to 45 days to get that corrected.

18 And obviously it is not a good situation for
19 either party.

20 What we would ask is that USDA ensure that
21 Citibank is able to accommodate the number of calls the
22 voice authorization line receives during these outages;
23 that's a big problem.

24 And in addition, we ask USDA to authorize the use
25 of emergency vouchers in all cases when the voice

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1 authorization line is not available, which seems to be all
2 the time when the system is down.

3 And we believe that, if we can work through these
4 problems, we can continue to provide the food stamp
5 recipients the benefits they deserve. Thank you.

6 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Ron. Our next presenter
7 is Kyle Vickers.

8 MR. VICKERS: See if I can raise this up a little
9 bit.

10 MS. PARADIS: I'll have to turn my head now.

11 MR. VICKERS: See how that works.

12 MS. PARADIS: Great. Thank you.

13 MR. VICKERS: Good afternoon, and welcome to
14 Missouri.

15 I have an assistant here that's going to bring --
16 and please don't consider this a gift, this is merely a
17 sample of Missouri's fresh produce, not to influence the
18 committee at all, but --

19 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, thank you. And napkins.

20 (General laughter.)

21 MR. VICKERS: I represent the Missouri Department
22 of Agriculture. I'm the Deputy Director there.

23 And I noticed that, in your description of the
24 description of the Food Stamp Program at its inception back
25 in the '30s and again in your current mission statement,

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1 part of your mission is to support agriculture, and I
2 applaud that. And we are trying to do the same here in
3 Missouri.

4 But we are also trying to reach out to consumers
5 and reach out to the people that ultimately use our product.

6 And so hopefully we can build some partnerships.

7 And I've got some good examples of that here in Missouri.

8 So that's kind of what I wanted to talk about today.

9 I would remind you that, though you are in Kansas
10 City, you are in Missouri. So these are Missouri peaches,
11 raised just east of here at Stevenson's Apple Orchard, a
12 fourth generation produce and retail business and a
13 wonderful restaurant. If you're ever here in Kansas City
14 and have time, please stop by.

15 You know, I talk to farmers nearly every day, and
16 nearly every farmer will, with some chagrin, complain that
17 the United States has for a number of years followed a cheap
18 food policy. And I think this is at least partially true.
19 We have certainly tried to follow a policy of abundant food
20 at reasonable prices to the public.

21 And ag economists and policy makers are very
22 proud of the fact and often cite the fact that only 10
23 percent of our income goes for food in the United States,
24 down from about 20 percent in the '50s.

25 But this is almost exclusively as a result of

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1 higher incomes. This is an aggregate figure. They take the
2 total income for America and total spent on food, and it
3 comes out to 10 percent. That's grossly inaccurate when
4 you're talking about real families with real food issues and
5 people buying food at the grocery store.

6 If you look at the spread of income between rich
7 and poor -- and this is a very obvious fact -- that a small
8 percentage of the population makes most of the income. That
9 really points out the problem that we have when we're
10 talking about a percentage of income spent for food.

11 Figures that I have -- and these are a little bit
12 hard to get -- indicate that the cost of food continues to
13 rise and even faster than at the rate of inflation.

14 And there's, no doubt, several reasons for this
15 rise in cost. And I'm sure that somewhere in the USDA there
16 are good statistics about the market basket costs of basic
17 food products for a family.

18 As to the rise in costs, some would suggest that
19 concentration in agribusiness and retail grocery outlets
20 have led to higher prices, and that may be true.

21 Others would say that higher costs come from
22 additional processing, service, and delivery charges added
23 to the costs of food.

24 And I'm constantly amazed as I go to the grocery
25 store. And I'm a two-parent, both working parents, family,

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1 and convenience in number one. But I'm constantly amazed at
2 the kind of processing and processed foods that are
3 available.

4 I'm not sure why we need aerosol cheese, but it's
5 certainly available in grocery stores today. And the
6 typical grocery stores will have 40,000 items. A lot of
7 them are there for convenience, and I understand that adds
8 to the cost.

9 But for whatever reason the cost of food
10 continues to rise and is especially significant for low
11 resource families and the working poor. And it's no wonder
12 that food banks and feeding programs are overwhelmed as we
13 enter this era of rising food costs for low income families.

14 And at the same time the consumers are paying
15 more for food, the farmers are getting less, the lowest
16 level in history, at only 20 percent of the food dollar.

17 So my first suggestion today is to take a closer
18 look at our farm and food policy and look at the impact of
19 our current more concentrated supply chain system for food
20 and agriculture and how that is impacting the costs and the
21 nutritional value of food and how that impacts feeding
22 programs for the nation's families and for the USDA feeding
23 and social service programs.

24 Congress is beginning to look at a new federal
25 farm bill, and we need to integrate our federal farm policy

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1 with our nutrition and feeding programs.

2 We need to connect farmers and recipients of
3 federal nutrition policy together in programs that are good
4 for our primary producers and that are good for rural and
5 urban families.

6 And therein lies one of the difficulties with
7 current food programs. While federal food stamp policies
8 have striven to provide food security to needy families,
9 there has been little linkage with the people who produce
10 that food in the communities in which farmers and consumers
11 reside.

12 We need to find state and community based
13 solutions that directly connect farmers and consumers
14 together.

15 One of the best examples for these programs is
16 the Farmers Market Nutrition Program through WIC. This
17 program gives farmers an opportunity to sell fresh produce
18 directly to limited resource families who might not
19 otherwise have the opportunity to access good, wholesome,
20 fresh produce.

21 This benefits farmers' bottom line and makes for
22 good community economic development while benefiting women
23 and children, who have good, nutritious food available.

24 Currently in our state, we -- three years ago we
25 had 55 farmers markets that we were working with; today

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1 there are 83 spread across our state. And that's certainly
2 the large ones. There are a lot of small, parking-lot kinds
3 of farmers markets that we're not working with.

4 But out of those 83 farmers markets, only 14 have
5 WIC available, so we really think we could do a lot better.
6 And really, that's an issue of funding.

7 The required state match limits the number of
8 markets that can participate in states like Missouri, and as
9 a result, it limits the number of recipients who can access
10 the program.

11 I understand that for fiscal 2000 the program has
12 been funded at about \$15 million. And limited funding means
13 that the program provides only \$18 in Missouri in coupons
14 for WIC recipients.

15 And when you look at the total food bill for a
16 month or for the year -- that's \$18 for the summer, for the
17 summer harvest season, to go to farmers markets -- that's
18 clearly inadequate.

19 But even so, that limited funding has had strong
20 benefits for the farmers that I represent. And in Missouri
21 last year we had 150 farmers that redeemed \$170,000 in
22 coupons in Missouri. And this year we have 240 farmers
23 enrolled in the program, have been through the training, and
24 are accepting the WIC coupons.

25 We collaborate with the Department of Health in

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1 this, and we're very proud of that partnership, and we're
2 working to build that and to spread that into other markets
3 around the state.

4 However, many WIC recipients don't cash in their
5 vouchers because they don't have transportation to markets.
6 Often in a large town we have one farmers market centrally
7 located.

8 We have here in Missouri -- we're very proud. We
9 just recently got word that we have a FSNP [phonetic] grant.
10 And we're going to work on some of those transportation
11 issues, particularly with the OATS service, and hopefully in
12 the long run to transfer that to private social groups and
13 churches to get transportation to those farmers markets.

14 And occasionally, if we can actually get the
15 people to the farmers market and give them the coupons, give
16 them the training, they will use immediately their \$20 in
17 WIC coupons.

18 So it's a program with huge demand. And it just
19 needs funding, and it needs some work.

20 The first thing we could do, of course, is not to
21 require the match. And we need expansion for this program,
22 because it really is limited.

23 It helps limited resource populations get access
24 to good, wholesome, healthy, fresh food, and farmers have a
25 good market for their produce. And that contributes

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1 mightily to community economic development.

2 While I focused mainly on the WIC aspect of the
3 Farmers Market Nutrition Program, the elderly also are
4 another limited resource program that could be helped that
5 are not currently eligible.

6 Some states such as Connecticut have been able to
7 creatively implement an elder FMNP that has been very
8 successful. Such a program needs to be implemented at the
9 national level.

10 And it can operate on a similar basis to WIC and
11 will expand market options for farmers while including
12 another overlooked population in the benefits of food from
13 farmers markets.

14 Any policy that can directly link farmers and
15 consumers needs to be encouraged at the national level.

16 And in addition to the expansion of WIC and an
17 elder FMNP, we need to look for creative ways to use the EBT
18 transfers at farmers markets and other direct marketing
19 outlets in a manner suitable for farmers and food stamp
20 clients.

21 While WIC programs have been very successful in
22 some areas of Missouri -- in fact, we've had two markets
23 that are at 55 or 60 percent redemption, which is
24 exceptionally high, and by the way, double over the previous
25 year -- the food stamp programs have not worked that well.

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1 And the funding for EBT technology at farmers
2 markets and other retail outlets could be one step towards
3 making this happen.

4 Currently, out of the 80-plus farmers markets
5 that we are working with, only one currently has EBT, and
6 that's in St. Louis at Soulard [phonetic] Market, obviously
7 a large center-city market.

8 But many of the farmers markets that we have
9 access to do not have access to EBT. And when I listen to
10 these folks from the food marketers, I can understand why,
11 because it's obviously somewhat complicated.

12 And when you're looking at very low resource
13 voluntary participants and so on, these farmers markets are
14 going to have a very difficult time using the EBT. But I
15 think it's an excellent way to get fresh fruit into the
16 mouths of hungry children.

17 Other policies could be implemented. For
18 instance, food stamp and WIC educational materials and
19 outreach need to be gotten out to farmers who can then
20 become directly involved with limited resource populations.

21 Food stamp programs need to be flexible enough to
22 encourage creative ways of linking farmers and their
23 clients. This includes ways to use food stamps for
24 community supported agriculture and gardens.

25 We need to make sure that school-age children

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1 eligible for subsidized school lunch programs have access to
2 fresh, wholesome food produced by farmers in their
3 community, thereby encouraging good nutrition and community
4 connections between school and farm.

5 And organizations like the National Association
6 of Farmers Market and Nutrition Program need more staffing
7 so that we can get more programs that benefit farmers and
8 federal food program recipients.

9 We are doing some great things in Missouri and
10 supporting these projects in many ways.

11 We are supporting the farmers markets with
12 dollars to help them promote their product. We now have tax
13 credits for retail outlets that sell Missouri produce.

14 We are developing an agricultural innovation
15 center and value-added grant and incentive program to help
16 farmers get to the point where they can sell a processed and
17 packaged food product.

18 We have a sustainable ag demonstration grant
19 program of \$3,000 grants, now \$5,000 grants. We've funded
20 120 such projects, many of which are directly related to
21 selling directly to the consumer products the farmers grown
22 on their farm, such things as pasture raised poultry or
23 range fed cattle that are then sold directly to consumers.

24 We are beginning a state meat inspection program
25 to allow some small meat processors to sell directly to the

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1 consumer.

2 We have a food circles networking project -- and
3 one of our sites is here in Kansas City -- where we're
4 trying to link people, farmers and consumers, together, help
5 them with the growing and the processing of food.

6 And we have an institutional marketing program
7 that we have started this summer with an intern, and we hope
8 to make permanent, that is looking at institutional markets
9 for farm fresh produce.

10 And certainly if we could have access to the
11 school lunch program, this could be a tremendous benefit to
12 the farmer, who would then have a nice volume of product in
13 his community, but it would also be good for school kids and
14 maybe their first access to fresh vegetables and produce
15 from Missouri's farmers.

16 So we're doing some really good things here in
17 Missouri, and we would welcome the chance to do more. And
18 we can explore ways to benefit farmers and consumers and
19 build good community relationships within our state, but we
20 need the Federal Government's help.

21 I thank you very much for coming out to Missouri
22 to listen to us. Thank you.

23 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Kyle. Makes me really
24 glad we came to America's Heartland. This is the first of
25 the conversations where we've had the State Department of

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1 Agriculture present, and we're delighted to have your
2 comments this afternoon.

3 I am going to ask the other presenters to try to
4 keep their comments, however, to about three or four
5 minutes, no more than five, if you possibly can. We've got
6 a lot of folks that we really want to hear from this
7 afternoon.

8 And the next presenter is Jim Riesberg.

9 MR. RIESBERG: Good afternoon. I'm Jim Riesberg
10 from Community Food Share, a food bank for Boulder County in
11 Colorado.

12 I didn't understand the true nature. I was
13 thinking about a little less formal setting, so I didn't
14 come with a lot of prepared statement, but rather some
15 thoughts and ideas.

16 And I was intrigued by a question that you
17 asked -- or a statement that you made, that we're up for
18 reauthorization in 2002.

19 Being a consulting gerontologist, I think of
20 what's going on with the Older Americans Act and want to
21 make sure that we start now whatever process is necessary to
22 make sure that reauthorization would even happen. The fact
23 that it's up doesn't mean that they'll get to it.

24 Representing food banks, we're not involved on a
25 daily basis like the previous presenters on the techniques

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1 and problems of EBT and the administrative aspects of the
2 food stamp system. That's being handled somewhere.

3 But our chief concerns are with distribution, and
4 are there ways that we can improve the nutrition from the
5 distribution end rather than from strictly the
6 administrative end?

7 In our particular food bank and in food banks
8 around the country, distribution is up anywhere from 14 to
9 30 percent over the last two years.

10 There can be a couple of ways we can look at
11 that. One, maybe we're getting better at marketing our
12 programs and services, and agencies are getting better at
13 working with their clients. But it also means that there
14 are many people now who are turning to food banks who
15 previously had found their source of food in other places.

16 Food banks primarily are small, although some are
17 large 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, so the food which
18 they have to distribute they're begging for in our local
19 communities and seeking donations, as well as the operating
20 money with which they are operating is also through grants
21 and other ways that they get that money.

22 And then, you look at what's happening with gas
23 prices and transportation costs, that we're being stretched
24 both ways more and more. People are coming through the
25 door, and the resources we have to supply these needs are

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1 getting harder and harder to come by.

2 Then, you look at what's happening with swell
3 allowances in the supermarkets, which make less product
4 available to food banks, and we begin to see a lot of
5 different problems that are happening.

6 So one of the ideas, as we were talking to a
7 number of our people, is that the supermarkets obviously are
8 receiving a good deal of value from the food stamp system,
9 with the people going in and finding the food and processing
10 their stamps.

11 Is there perhaps a way that we could, then, make
12 it easier to spend food stamp money in some nontraditional
13 ways?

14 For example, opening a food bank one day a month
15 and having it announced that this is food stamp participants
16 day, where food stamp participants can then come in and
17 select from product at a local food bank, oftentimes at 12
18 or 14 cents a pound, and thereby really stretching their
19 dollar.

20 This is not something -- and obviously we would
21 have to work with the supermarkets. It's not something that
22 most would be prepared to do on a daily basis and have 24-
23 hour service. But it is a way that they can certainly
24 stretch the dollar.

25 Particularly this time of year, when food banks

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1 are really heavy in produce and other types of things that
2 are rolling in, it could give them good access to
3 nutritional food and really begin to make things work.

4 At that same time, perhaps it would be an
5 opportunity, if it was once a month, to have a food stamp
6 representative in that particular location to perhaps be
7 doing registration.

8 Many people who might come by a food bank who,
9 for whatever reason, don't find their way to a Social
10 Services office or something else.

11 Agencies who regularly come to food banks could
12 perhaps even set up systems where they could transport
13 people and get their registration done at that same time.

14 It would be an excellent opportunity for
15 educational opportunities to come into the food bank. Many
16 of them have other rooms. We have a complete commercial
17 kitchen.

18 We could be doing the nutrition training and
19 things at that period of time and then maybe making it
20 available for them, even on the nutrition training, to take
21 many of those products home at very affordable prices so
22 they could continue.

23 So often they will attend the classes, they get
24 some good ideas. And then, when they go to the market, they
25 find they really can't get the items that they need in order

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1 to take advantage of the nutrition education which they've
2 just received.

3 And it could also be a time, then, for trouble
4 shooting and answering questions, to have someone from the
5 Food Stamp offices there so this could just be a day when
6 they can get a lot of things resolved that they may have on
7 their minds.

8 We have, in the Second Harvest system, over 200
9 food banks. They're represented in every state.

10 And perhaps there are some ways that we could
11 work together with Food Stamps to find out if some barriers
12 could be taken down, that that's possible to work with the
13 supermarkets who we would have to work with, because many of
14 the times the food that they have was donated by the markets
15 to start with.

16 And to see if there are some ways, not only to
17 work on the administrative end, but to work on the
18 distribution end.

19 We're very good at finding food which would
20 otherwise go unused in this country and try to make it
21 available to people who really need it.

22 And perhaps through working with the Food Stamp
23 Program, we could find another source to reach out to these
24 people that the agencies are not now reaching and put all of
25 our good efforts together.

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1 And together I think we could make a dent in what
2 we call food insecurity. We're starting to change our
3 vocabulary now, talk about food security, hunger, and food
4 insecurity.

5 And it needs to be accessible, and it needs to be
6 done in that definition in socially acceptable ways.

7 And food banks at this time have the socially
8 acceptable way, and so maybe we need to find some ways to
9 open those doors and work more closely together.

10 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Jim. We're going to
11 hear now from Ellen Jones.

12 MS. JONES: Good afternoon. I'm Ellen Jones, and
13 I represent Catholic Community Services/Catholic Charities

14 from the Archdiocese in Kansas. And I am the director of
15 the Emergency Assistance Center in north Johnson County,
16 where the biggest of my business is the food pantry.

17 The concern that I have with the Food Stamp
18 Program is that the marketing needs to be upgraded so that
19 clients and low income persons do understand that the Food

20 Stamp Program is not Welfare, because there is such a
21 stigmatism on Welfare.

22 I think that, if we marketed the program so that
23 people understand that it is there for them to use, that we
24 would get more clients that would apply for the service.

25 On the administrative end, I find that most of my

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1 clients are hesitant to go to the office to apply for food
2 stamps because of the process of filling out that
3 application.

4 I have clients that go and come back to my office
5 and say, Well, I went, but that application was six or seven
6 pages, and I just couldn't get through it.

7 You know, if we had some advocates or people that
8 would be willing to work with them to fill out that
9 application, or if the application process was simplified so
10 that they could do it without a lot of hassle, I think that
11 that would improve the program, also.

12 I have clients that are fearful about going in to
13 fill out the application. I had a family that I worked with
14 that had eleven children. The father was in the country
15 illegally. And they would not go fill out the application
16 for food stamps because they knew that they would have to be
17 reported because of him being in the country illegally.

18 So we need to look at removing some barriers that
19 will prevent those children from eating just because Dad's
20 not here on a legal basis.

21 The other thing is getting the food stamps to
22 them in a timely basis. It takes sometimes four days. If I
23 have a family that goes in for emergency assistance, it
24 takes them four days for the process to work. So SRS is
25 sending them to my office for me to feed them in that length

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1 of time.

2 So I think if we could do something so that the
3 process could be shortened so that the benefits are given to
4 the clients more timely, that would help.

5 We also might look at -- and I've encouraged my
6 clients and my staff to be accessible to help clients fill
7 out that application.

8 I know that the State is responsible for doing
9 that, but maybe social service agencies could also be
10 administrators of the Food Stamp Program, and we could do
11 applications and send them directly so that the clients
12 would not have to come to our office and then go to the
13 Welfare office for assistance. Thank you.

14 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Ellen. We now have, I'm
15 told, Sabrina Mitchell.

16 MS. MITCHELL: That's me, but I'm just here to
17 listen.

18 MS. PARADIS: No?

19 MS. MITCHELL: No.

20 MS. PARADIS: You're just here to listen?

21 MS. MITCHELL: Yes.

22 MS. PARADIS: Good. We're glad you're here,
23 Sabrina.

24 All right. Then, our next presenter is Joe
25 Hendrixson.

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1 MR. HENDRIXSON: Good afternoon.

2 MS. PARADIS: Joe, would you be more comfortable
3 lowering that microphone just a little bit, you think?

4 MR. HENDRIXSON: It might work better.

5 MS. PARADIS: Let's try that.

6 MR. HENDRIXSON: There you go. Is that better?

7 MS. PARADIS: Sounds good.

8 MR. HENDRIXSON: Okay. I'm Joe Hendrixson, the
9 Director of Kansas Ecumenical Ministries, the state council
10 of churches in Kansas. And I appreciate the opportunity to
11 share with you the perspective of the churches of Kansas on
12 this important issue.

13 Throughout 1998, the nine member denominations of
14 Kansas Ecumenical Ministries, through its advocacy group,
15 Kansas Interfaith Impact, worked to study the impact of
16 Welfare Reform on the vitality of our communities.

17 And then, in 1999 that study expanded to focus on
18 agriculture and food production.

19 In fact, I would encourage you to add the state
20 of Kansas to those wonderful remarks that we heard from the
21 Ag Department in Missouri. If only I had thought to bring
22 some ice cream from our dairy to go with the Missouri
23 peaches, it would have worked very well.

24 (General laughter.)

25 MR. HENDRIXSON: We could have partnered there, I

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1 think.

2 As we all know, assistance for the poor has been
3 accessed in much greater numbers throughout 1999. And from
4 our perspective, that hits particularly local congregations,
5 the Kansas regional church bodies that have programs such as
6 that, and clusters of church communions like Kansas
7 Ecumenical Ministries.

8 In Topeka, where I live, one of our principal
9 religious sponsored community service agencies, Doorstep,
10 has experienced a 10 percent increase annually in their
11 requests for food assistance since the 1996 inception of
12 Welfare Reform. And the churches of Kansas, of course, are
13 worried about those kinds of numbers.

14 Much of the continued unmet need has fallen to
15 the community hunger relief agencies and to the religious
16 community agencies.

17 The member church communions of Kansas Ecumenical
18 Ministries are firmly committed to the proposition that
19 hunger in Kansas is solvable, and the key to that solution
20 is an effective and widely accessible Food Stamp Program.

21 Food banks and other charities are not and just
22 simply cannot be a replacement for the kind of social safety
23 net program that food stamps represent.

24 Why aren't more enrolled in the program? Well,
25 we've already heard this afternoon a number of excellent

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1 examples of some of the difficulties.

2 Some of the anecdotal evidence that we hear in
3 our office are things like that families are reluctant to
4 apply because of problems with the application process. We
5 know that application forms sometimes can be long, difficult
6 to use, using confusing terms or language that's unfamiliar
7 to the applicant.

8 Sometimes that may mean that it's a person who
9 has difficulty with literacy or difficulty in English as a
10 second language. But also it sometimes just simply means
11 that the language is written in very complicated ways that's
12 difficult for some folks to process.

13 In addition, when families apply for food stamp
14 benefits, they are often required to supply some detailed
15 information about their household composition or income or
16 assets and expenses that requires some official
17 documentation that, for some of them, is just very difficult
18 to have at hand and to be able to provide in a timely
19 manner.

20 As the time and the monetary costs increase
21 regarding transportation costs and child care and lost time
22 from the job in order to go through the application process,
23 a lot of times families just simply become less willing to
24 complete the process for what turns out to be sometimes a
25 potentially small or short-lived benefit.

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1 We also hear that, in some instances, food stamps
2 applicants are instructed to go to a local charity for food
3 aid rather than to apply for the program.

4 They may sometimes be denied an application on
5 their first visit and told to come back some days later.

6 So there's a lot of complex reasons why families
7 sometimes are not getting the food stamps that they deserve
8 and the different kinds of barriers that are there for
9 participation in the Food Stamp Program in Kansas.

10 Some of the policy implications that we see --
11 and these are in very broad terms from our perspective --
12 certainly simplifying the application process would be one
13 of the key things for us.

14 Kansas has a wonderful model already in place for
15 a simplified application process in its CHIP program called
16 Health Wave.

17 Our state's version of the National Children's
18 Health Insurance Program uses a two-page application to
19 screen applicants for eligibility both in Health Wave and in
20 the Medicaid program.

21 And I would think that surely a similar kind of
22 process could be developed for the Food Stamp Program in the
23 state.

24 Secondly, we need to continue to work hard to
25 increase public awareness of food stamp eligibility rules.

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1 From our perspective as part of the religious
2 community, it's important for everyone to remember that
3 states can collaborate with community based and faith based
4 organizations to both increase public awareness of the food
5 stamp eligibility rules and to assist with enrollment
6 efforts. And doing that, we can certainly collaborate in
7 some important ways.

8 But to my knowledge, no such effort involving the
9 faith community has been attempted in Kansas.

10 Thirdly, assisting with enrollment efforts. And
11 there are a whole bunch of different ways in which the faith
12 community and other community based organizations could
13 certainly be working with our Government officials in order
14 to provide some better assistance for the clients who need
15 to be enrolled in the program.

16 Fourthly, and lastly, I would suggest that we
17 need some assistance in helping to train the entire locally
18 based human services team for some consumer friendly
19 encounters.

20 While our Kansas Department of Social and
21 Rehabilitation Services has changed significantly over the
22 last year under new leadership, its philosophy of being a
23 resource rather than a place of last resort for people who
24 are in need still has, in some cases, yet to filter down to
25 every front-line employee.

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1 We need to have some ways in which every member
2 of the local human services team -- all the way from the
3 receptionist who answers the telephone and is the first
4 greeter at the door to the office managers to the area team
5 leaders -- all of them need to be able to approach their
6 clients in a consumer friendly attitude.

7 We know that this is a huge and complex
8 organization to change philosophically, but we also know
9 that, in spite of Secretary Schalansky's best intentions,
10 assistance with retraining workers is badly needed.

11 The nine member denominations of our organization
12 would strongly suggest that you consider improving program
13 operations through better training like that, through
14 assistance with enrollment efforts, through expanding
15 outreach to eligible nonparticipants, particularly the
16 working poor, and simplifying the application process.

17 We know that the Food Stamp Program is one of the
18 most critical programs in the state's arsenal against
19 hunger, and we appreciate what it has already done for our
20 society and look forward to further improvements. Thank
21 you.

22 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Joe. Our next presenter
23 is Peter De Simone.

24 MR. SIMONE: Good afternoon. My name is Peter De
25 Simone. I'm the Director of the Missouri Association for

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1 Social Welfare. That is a citizens' membership organization
2 dedicated to social justice in Missouri. And this is its
3 100th year of continuing operation.

4 One of its early experiences with the Food Stamp
5 Program was helping the state to spread the Food Stamp
6 Program around the state in the early '60s. So we've been
7 engaged with the Food Stamp Program for a long time.

8 In May -- and I will leave this at the desk -- we
9 released a report on food stamps called, Food Stamps,
10 Declining Access for Missouri's Food Insecure and Eligible
11 Families. And what it does is measure the participation
12 rate in all of Missouri's 115 counties.

13 And among the things that we found is that
14 Missouri on the average serves about 57 percent of the
15 eligible persons in the state.

16 But when you look at the situation more closely
17 at each individual county, the percentage of those served in
18 individual counties ranges from a high of 84 percent in
19 Mississippi County to a low of 21 percent in Nodaway County.

20 But there have been significant drops all over
21 the state since Federal Welfare Reform has occurred of
22 eligible people and hungry people not getting the food
23 stamps that they need.

24 There are 80 of Missouri's 115 counties that
25 serve below the average number of eligibles in the state.

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1 There are a lot of reasons, some of which were
2 mentioned here today. But I would like to offer at least
3 one major one and a challenge to USDA.

4 We hear the State constantly complaining about
5 the pressure that they are under from USDA to prevent
6 errors. But apparently an error is not when you neglect to
7 give hungry people food stamps. That's apparently not an
8 error.

9 Now, I would urge USDA to put as much pressure on
10 the states to use the Food Stamp Program as an anti-hunger
11 program as it uses for it to prevent errors.

12 We need more than bean counters in state
13 government agencies, but they apparently have many bean
14 counters there as a result of the pressure that USDA has put
15 upon them.

16 They are good people there, too, who are trying
17 to do their best. But among the best they have to do is to
18 stop errors from occurring.

19 Within the program, also, I think, under USDA
20 influence, is a presumption of guilt, that low income people
21 have to struggle through this terrible, terrible, intrusive,
22 ugly system in many cases because they are presumed to be
23 guilty.

24 I think it's time for you all to change and to
25 use your powerful influences upon the state to do a better

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1 job. They are not doing a good job now. I'm sure that the
2 problems that we are having in Missouri exist in other parts
3 of the country, as well.

4 Well, anyway, welcome to the Bread Basket of the
5 United States and the Bread Basket of the world, in fact,
6 where there are tons and tons of hungry people.

7 You have an opportunity to do something about it.
8 It is hard sleeping at night knowing that there are so many
9 of us who are not getting enough food, even though the Food
10 Stamp Program is just beyond reach and just beyond reach
11 because of some of the problems created not only by State
12 Government, but by USDA itself.

13 Please fix it. Thank you.

14 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Peter. Our next
15 presenter is Anna Lilia De La Rosa -- oh. Eva Krouse.
16 Sorry.

17 MS. KROUSE: My name is Eva Krouse, and I've been
18 an Income Maintenance caseworker with the State of Missouri
19 Family Services for six years and a month.

20 And in June 2000, I handled 393 cases in my own
21 caseload that included Food Stamps and Medicaid for children
22 and for adults.

23 And I was wanting to address the ineligible and
24 illegal alien policies that are in place in the state of
25 Missouri for the Food Stamp Program.

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1 Ineligible aliens are people who have entered the
2 country but have not worked at least 40 quarters in the
3 United States, and that's, I think, ten years, if I'm
4 correct.

5 Ineligible aliens are not counted, nor their
6 income they bring into the household. And these households
7 usually will receive the full allotment allowed for the
8 remainder of the family members.

9 Most ineligible aliens are usually the primary
10 wage earner of the household, and none of their money is
11 counted.

12 Illegal aliens have even a more difficult
13 guideline in budgeting their income, I personally feel. I
14 handle cases like this on a personal basis. And we have to
15 use what's called a pro rata share to budget their income.

16 An example would be if you had a six-person
17 household and the wage earner was the illegal alien you have
18 to remove. You have to take that income, divide it by six,
19 and then multiply it by five, and then, that's your income
20 you use for the month.

21 And this is a real difficult policy for the
22 workers and for the customers to understand, because you're
23 trying to figure out whose money you don't take and whose
24 money you do. And it's hard to understand, and it's
25 confusing for the workers who have to do this.

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1 I'm required to make sure that there are no
2 fleeing felons, persons convicted of drug crimes that are
3 receiving food stamps.

4 I'm responsible for mandatory reporting of child
5 abuse. I have to protect people from abusive relationships
6 that are inflicted on them by their child's other parent.

7 I am responsible if somebody receives food stamps
8 who should not or a child or woman or man who is abused and
9 I do not report their abuse, but I am not allowed to report
10 to the INS of an illegal alien. And I think that's a
11 discriminatory thing against American citizens.

12 I feel that American citizens who are receiving
13 and applying for food stamps are being discriminated against
14 just because they happen to be born in this country. And I
15 cannot exclude income from them. Just because they are a
16 citizen, and they haven't worked at least 40 quarters, I
17 have to consider all of their income.

18 Income Maintenance workers have to have knowledge
19 regarding a minimum of 15 programs available in the state of
20 Missouri to the public.

21 I am not against aliens receiving food stamps,
22 but I think the confusing guidelines could be eliminated for
23 ineligible and illegal aliens by counting all their income,
24 all their household members, all their resources, and all
25 their expenses when budgeting for the food stamps.

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1 I don't feel there are any other guidelines that
2 are more unfair to the American citizens than the ineligible
3 and illegal alien policies we have in place.

4 I appreciate your time. And I do my best to
5 prevent errors happening in my Food Stamp caseload. I just
6 wanted you to know that. Thank you very much.

7 MS. PARADIS: I know you do. You don't have any
8 choice on that, do you? Thank you, Eva.

9 Our next presenter, then, I think, is Janice
10 Phelan. Great.

11 MS. PHELAN: I'm Janice Phelan with the Missouri
12 Department of Health, and I work with the Missouri Nutrition
13 Network and the Healthy Children nutrition education
14 initiative in the state of Missouri.

15 And I want to your first goal and encourage the
16 continuation of the Nutrition Education Plan, support of the
17 Food Stamp Nutrition Education Plan. It is through this
18 plan that we have been able to do a lot of good things here
19 in Missouri.

20 The 22 public and private partners of the
21 Missouri Nutrition Network have leveraged additional support
22 through the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Plan to research,
23 create, and coordinate the Eat for Health campaign, which
24 reached nearly 4 million Missourians last year using social
25 marketing principles.

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1 And it is making a difference in food stamps
2 families' nutrition behaviors.

3 The Missouri Department of Health is the
4 administering agency for the Missouri Nutrition Network. It
5 is committed to improving the health of Missouri children
6 and has allocated \$300,000 annually to support community
7 coalitions who are coordinating and conducting nutrition
8 education within their communities.

9 And through the Nutrition Education Plan, these
10 dollars are able to be matched.

11 And we will be getting a report from our nine
12 coalitions that we have funded this past year to show all
13 the good that they have done and include that in our final
14 report this year. And we have awarded four additional
15 community coalition grants coming up this coming year.

16 So we really would appreciate if that kind of
17 support continues in the reallocation.

18 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Janice. Next we have
19 John Taylor.

20 MR. TAYLOR: Hello. My name is John Taylor. I
21 work for the Department of Social Services, Division of
22 Family Services. I'm an adult worker.

23 And I want to hit on two points today, first, the
24 car.

25 Most cases that I handle, I have people who come

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1 in and apply, and they have a vehicle that might be over the
2 max resource and would stop them from being able to receive
3 the benefits of food stamps in a temporary basis of in
4 between jobs or even coming out of a educational program
5 looking for work or whatever.

6 And in some cases would have to put them on a
7 level where they might have to sell the car and buy a
8 cheaper, nonreliable one in order to even benefit for not
9 just food stamps, but other programs, as well.

10 In regards to that, if we cannot eliminate that
11 eligibility issue, one of the things that we could look at
12 is the fact that the State requires you to have an insurance
13 policy, and then we could use the insurance as a deduction
14 like we do homeowner's or the rent, like that.

15 Or you could also increase the max limit of the
16 resource. Seeing how the car prices are going up, I think
17 the max resource should go up with it.

18 The second is for the elderly. Most of my cases,
19 I find that the elderly is on a fixed income. When they get
20 their Social Security increase, the rent goes up with it, so
21 they have basically no inflation cost of living with that.

22 But their food stamps, on the most basis, is \$10.
23 Okay? And I've got a couple examples here.

24 An elderly person who had \$512 income would get a
25 monthly allotment of \$60. A person out there working in the

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1 work market at 512 would get an allotment of \$106.

2 Now, there's a gross injustice here. The elderly
3 who has worked all their lives and, for the most part, paid
4 into these programs are getting the less benefit and has the
5 less resources, be it transportation or the ability to
6 work, or even the prospect of getting hired.

7 The thing that I would suggest is either give
8 them the same deduction you do for the earned income or
9 allow over a certain age, just give them a standard
10 deduction to go along with that.

11 I have clients that call me begging me for a way
12 to get 20 or \$30 into the house, and this would be a good
13 way to do that. Thank you.

14 MS. PARADIS: Thank you. Our next presenter is
15 Jo Britt-Rankin.

16 MS. BRITT-RANKIN: Thank you. My name is Jo
17 Britt-Rankin. I'm the Administrative Director for the
18 Family Nutrition Education Program at the University of
19 Missouri.

20 And I would like to address the Nutrition
21 Education Program that is part of the Food Stamp Program.

22 I think in Missouri we have done many great
23 things, and we are able currently to reach about 100,000
24 Missourians that participate in the Food Stamp Program, of
25 which about 80 percent of those are children.

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1 We're only reaching about 97 of 114 counties in
2 the state and only about 50 percent of the school districts.

3 We know there is a great need for this program.
4 And I would really like to encourage that, during the
5 reauthorization, that this program continue to be included.

6 Just to share with you, one of the issues that we

7 address is food safety. And when we're working with young
8 children on food safety, one of the first things they are
9 taught is to wash their hands, to have a clean working
10 surface.

11 But when we're teaching hand washing, we are
12 seeing such a ripple effect. In one school district, the
13 custodian reported that, six months after education, the

14 soap use was doubled.

15 And in that same school district, teachers have
16 noticed that, if education was provided in their classroom,
17 their attendance rates were higher than in those classrooms
18 that did not receive education.

19 I think this is an effect on health and

20 nutrition. It has to, again, go into education, because if
21 the child is in the classroom, hopefully they are gaining
22 more knowledge.

23 I think one thing I would encourage as we look at
24 the Nutrition Education Program is to continue to allow it
25 to be flexible.

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1 One of the greatest things we have looked at is,
2 in the state of Missouri, we're very diverse, as many other
3 states are. We need to have the ability to adapt the
4 program to meet the local need. It needs to be interactive.

5 Mr. Vickers talked about the great produce that
6 we provide in Missouri and that's grown here. Our educators
7 are able to demonstrate and make our programs hands-on and
8 interactive.

9 One of our goals with the nutrition education is
10 to increase fruits and vegetable consumption. Many of our
11 clients do not know how to prepare the fresh fruits and
12 vegetables that are available. And so by making it
13 interactive we are allowing them to have the opportunity to
14 prepare that food product.

15 And we actually have people coming back and
16 telling us, several months after education, that they are
17 providing that product to their family. So I think that's a
18 testimony that we are seeing long-term positive behavior
19 change.

20 And so I would just like to encourage you to
21 allow the Nutrition Education Program to continue and to
22 ensure that it does allow for flexibility in education to
23 meet the need. Thank you.

24 MS. PARADIS: Thank you. Our next presenter is
25 Jerry Helmick.

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1 MR. HELMICK: I'm Jerry Helmick. I'm a business
2 representative for the UFCW District 2 here in Kansas City.
3 We represent about 12,000 people throughout Kansas,
4 Missouri, and parts of Oklahoma.

5 The one thing that we're looking at here is that
6 these people are not just statistics. You need to look at
7 them as human beings.

8 And a lot of them are low wage earners. Okay?
9 There are companies out there that, fortunately or
10 unfortunately for us, are not under union contract, such as
11 Tyson and places like that, that these people virtually have
12 to have food stamps to exist. Okay? Or else they're not
13 going to be able to exist at all within this country.

14 Our message is simple: The Food Stamp Program is
15 vitally important in reducing hunger and malnutrition in our
16 nation. The UFCW fully supports the Food Stamp Program and
17 the Kennedy-Specter Hunger Relief Act.

18 The proposed food stamp regulations changes, we
19 fully support those that would make it easier access for
20 American families or families that are residing within the
21 United States. If they're going to weaken the process in
22 which these people have to rely to gain food stamps and
23 benefit from them, then we oppose those. And we oppose any
24 regulations that are going to weaken that system.

25 In this country no one should go to bed hungry at

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1 night. It just should never happen. Thank you.

2 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much. The next
3 presenter is Arlene Carrow-Crocker.

4 MS. CARROW-CROCKER: Good afternoon. I am Arlene
5 Carrow-Crocker, and I work for the UFCW International Union.
6 I'm a collective bargaining representative out of Grapevine,
7 Texas.

8 And I wanted to say I appreciate you allowing me
9 the time to come and speak to you. I have just a few short
10 comments.

11 I am speaking to you as a representative on
12 behalf of 1.4 million UFCW members. More than a million of
13 our UFCW members work in the food manufacturing, processing,
14 and retail facilities.

15 We believe that the feeding of the American
16 family is what we do for a living. At the same time, we
17 know that there are millions of Americans who are hungry and
18 malnourished in communities all over this nation.

19 The Food Stamp Program, while not a perfect
20 system to alleviate hunger in this country, it is an
21 important and indispensable part of our nation's social
22 safety net.

23 We support the program. We support the
24 strengthening of the program. And we hope that the proposed
25 changes will be beneficial to food stamp recipients.

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1 For example, we fully support changes that would
2 enable easier access for families with reliable vehicles to
3 qualify. However, we are opposed to proposals that would
4 change or weaken the application, verification, and
5 certification procedures that would undermine recipients'
6 access to vital nutrition assistance.

7 We are opposed to a proposal to remove or weaken
8 protections that are intended to ensure that families
9 leaving cash assistance programs as well as working families
10 with low earnings can obtain the food stamp benefits,
11 including food stamps by eligible legal immigrants and their
12 families, including citizen children.

13 A reduction in the food stamps because of
14 economic growth and the reduction in poverty should be
15 universally celebrated.

16 However, a reduction in the use of food stamps
17 because of regulatory changes in criteria would reflect a
18 denial of hungry people who should be eligible of legal and
19 available benefits.

20 In conclusion, we are strongly opposed to
21 proposed changes that would make it more difficult for low
22 income working families, those recently returning to the
23 work force, and eligible legal immigrants and citizen
24 children to obtain food stamps. We urge that any other
25 proposals be reconsidered.

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1 I thank you for your attention, and I thank you
2 for allowing me to speak to you.

3 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Arlene. Our next
4 testifier is a Ms. Connor.

5 MS. CONNOR: Hi. My name is Carletta Connor, and
6 I'm with Mid-Missouri ROW, and I am a food stamps recipient.

7 My concern is the way that you are treated when
8 you go to the offices. They act like everything is theirs.

9 I once lost my card because of the fault of the
10 800 worker that took my call. I was told that my name was
11 changed, I could not receive my card. I go to my worker.
12 She has never heard of this.

13 There I was with four kids, two weeks, no stamps.

14 I want to get a car. They're telling me I cannot get a car
15 for the simple fact the car I want costs too much. I want
16 nice things; everybody does.

17 A bank account, I can't have that because, if I
18 get too much, then I don't get my food stamps.

19 You know, I just want to see that you guys can
20 make things better for us that are trying. Thank you.

21 MS. PARADIS: Thank you. Our next presenter is
22 Robert Hughes.

23 DR. HUGHES: My name is Dr. Robert Hughes, and
24 I'm the Associate Dean for Human and Environmental Sciences
25 at the University of Missouri.

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1 And I provide overall leadership to the Nutrition
2 Education Program through the Extension Service in the state
3 of Missouri.

4 I'm here to address the question on your list
5 that was, What's working well within the Food Stamp Program?

6 As was noted at the beginning of the meeting, a
7 major purpose of the Food Stamp Program is nutrition
8 education.

9 And I'd like to briefly describe some evidence
10 that exists that the nutrition component within the Food
11 Stamp Program is succeeding and changing nutritional
12 practices of children and adults.

13 My report is based on nutrition education that's
14 conducted in the Kansas City area and the seven surrounding
15 counties. During 1999, over 13,000 children and adults
16 participated in this program.

17 Among the families that participated in the
18 program, the following changes in management of food
19 purchasing occurred:

20 Almost 40 percent improved planning of meals; a
21 third indicated that they were more often to take a list for
22 grocery shopping; and perhaps most importantly, a third of
23 them reported that they were less likely to run out of food
24 at the end of the month.

25 When we look at eating behavior, our success is

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1 more limited, where here only about 3 to 8 percent of the
2 families participating in our program report changes or
3 improvements in the amount of fruits, vegetables, and dairy
4 products that they are consuming.

5 Importantly, though, when we look at those
6 families, those children and adults who participate about a
7 year in our program were two to three times as successful in
8 changing nutritional practices. This means now that almost
9 20 percent of these families are reporting increases in the
10 amount of fruit and vegetable consumption.

11 This indicates to us that the nutrition component
12 is making a difference in the lives of families. And we
13 think it's very important to continue the Nutrition Program
14 as a part of the Food Stamp Program. Thanks very much.

15 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much. Loretta
16 Pyles.

17 MS. PYLES: Good afternoon. My name is Loretta
18 Pyles, and I'm the Coordinator of Economic Justice Policy
19 and Programs for the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and
20 Domestic Violence.

21 We are a nonprofit agency representing battered
22 women and sexual assault survivors across the state of
23 Kansas.

24 Let me start by saying I don't believe we can
25 completely separate our discussion on the administering of

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1 TANF and other benefits without food stamps.

2 Because the administration is linked in Kansas,
3 the problems with administering TANF benefits and food
4 stamps are essentially the same.

5 I'm here to tell you that the alarming trend of
6 Welfare Reform's work first policy and the practice of full
7 family sanctions are hurting families in our state.

8 Accessing benefits is an onerous process,
9 oftentimes confusing and humiliating. It is within all of
10 our power to make it less so, to make this community
11 resource more customer friendly and more humane.

12 One of the primary ways in which a batterer may
13 control his partner is by means of economic abuse, making
14 the decision about whether or not she can work, making her
15 ask for an allowance, or harassing her in the workplace so
16 she gets fired.

17 When a battered woman is trying to leave an
18 abusive relationship, she is at much greater risk of being
19 fatally injured than if she stayed.

20 What we know about battered women trying to leave
21 is that the level of economic resources available to her is
22 the primary determinant of whether she and her children will
23 be able to safely leave the abusive relationship.

24 If those resources are available to her in a way
25 that is accessible, efficient, and dignified, then her

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1 chances of being safe will be increased. Public economic
2 supports have always been a vital safety net for families
3 leaving abusive situations.

4 One of the most formidable barriers to accessing
5 all public benefits is the sometimes hostile climate of the
6 Welfare office.

7 The climate has been that of benefits police,
8 where workers spend unnecessary hours making sure
9 impoverished families are not defrauding them for a few
10 extra dollars of food stamps per month.

11 Battered women staying in our shelters
12 consistently report experiencing the humiliation of
13 stereotyping and blatant racism. Put off and frustrated by
14 this treatment, they return to their batterers in many
15 cases.

16 One answer to this problem is to take the program
17 out of the hands of caseworkers and move it to a mail-in
18 application process.

19 As Joe Hendrixson from Kansas Ecumenical
20 Ministries mentioned, this has worked well with our
21 children's health insurance program in Kansas, Health Wave.

22 If caseworkers are going to continue to
23 administer the Food Stamp Program, it is imperative that
24 there be mandatory training on the root causes of poverty in
25 this nation.

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1 The essence of this training should focus on
2 sensitivity and fostering an understanding of what poverty
3 really is, not a result of individual and moral
4 psychological failings, but an inherent function of our
5 economic system. As an antipoverty program, this is the
6 least we can do.

7 The Food Stamp Program is a lifeline for the
8 working poor. We don't need to change the name, we don't
9 need to get a new logo or change the image. We need to make
10 the process more accessible, more humane, and more
11 dignified. Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Loretta. The next
14 presenter is Cindy McKenzie.

15 And I think after Cindy presents we'll probably
16 take about a 15-minute break, so just to let you know that
17 that's coming up.

18 MS. McKENZIE: Good afternoon. I'm Cindy
19 McKenzie. I work for the Division of Family Services. I'm
20 a caseworker.

21 I have a couple of points I wanted to bring up.
22 When I first got here, I didn't think I wanted to say
23 anything, and then I got to thinking and listening to
24 people.

25 I think that there should be a way that we can

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1 focus more on the elderly. I think, when you're allowing
2 18- to 49-year-olds to get \$127 in food stamps for five
3 months, and you give an elderly person on a fixed income \$10
4 a month --

5 The elderly person has basically no means to make
6 any more income. That's what they have. A person between
7 18 and 49 does have potential. We automatically give a
8 homeless man that's 25 \$127, but my grandmother 10.

9 I guess I'm more focused on that because I'm
10 getting closer to being elderly.

11 (General laughter.)

12 MS. MCKENZIE: The other thing is, I'm a TANF
13 caseworker, and I've been a caseworker for four years. And
14 in my four years, I've had one case that sticks out in my
15 mind. My household was one penny over the income
16 guidelines, and I had to reject that person.

17 I would think that maybe we could increase the
18 income guidelines and maybe focus more on net income instead
19 of gross income.

20 Of if that's not a possibility, maybe they could
21 set up some kind of a program where people could purchase
22 EBT cards at maybe a lower cost so that people can still go
23 to the grocery stores and benefit from the program, but
24 they're paying into the program. I think years ago they had
25 program like that.

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1 I was listening to some of the other caseworkers
2 talking. And the immigrant thing is just really confusing.
3 If they're ineligible or illegal, you know, everything
4 changes.

5 And as a caseworker, when we have all these
6 different programs going on, we get confused. There's
7 delays because we have several barriers.

8 The timely recerts by the 15th of the month: If
9 we get 30 applications by the 15th of the month, we have 15
10 days to process those applications. You know, that puts a
11 lot of pressure.

12 The other thing that the Federal Government or
13 probably the USDA implemented was the Census Bureau, the
14 people that went to work for the Census Bureau. We didn't
15 count their income.

16 Seems like if we can make an exception for that,
17 maybe there's another type of program that could have the
18 same benefit, where people that are transitioning off of
19 Welfare can benefit, because we cut everything from them.

20 They get a job making 7 or \$8 an hour, and we
21 take their food stamps, we take their day care, we take
22 everything, their housing. And all of a sudden, now they're
23 faced with the decision, Do I want to go to work every day
24 and be worse off than I was before I got the job?

25 So we're kind of putting -- we're making them

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1 make a choice between accepting a job or keeping their
2 benefits. And then, if they want to stay on their benefits,
3 we tell them, You only have two more years left. What are
4 you going to do?

5 So we're just pulling the plug and leaving them
6 stranded out there, and then all the rules and regulations
7 that we're under, we seem to be cold and not caring. But
8 it's like we don't have a choice. We have to follow the
9 guidelines.

10 I'm sorry, you're a penny over, you're rejected,
11 you know. Ask your boss to reduce your hours and then come
12 back and see me. Thank you.

13 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Cindy.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. PARADIS: Now, I think we'll take about a 15-
16 minute break. We're going to eat some peaches up here.

17 And our vision statement is that we lead America
18 in ending hunger. So we'll put these peaches out. And I
19 hope anyone who thinks they look as good as I do will come
20 and help yourself and will eat these good Missouri peaches
21 that Kyle brought us.

22 And we'll be back here in about 15 minutes.

23 (Whereupon, a short recess was taken.)

24 MS. PARADIS: Okay. Let's get started again.

25 I'm delighted to see that we were able to share some of

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1 these peaches. There will be a few left over when we're
2 finished, so any of you who didn't get one, first come,
3 first serve.

4 I understand that we need some more information
5 on John Taylor if he is still around. If you could go to
6 the registration desk, John, they need some more information
7 on you for our record.

8 And we have another caller. So I'm pleased that
9 we do and would like to have that caller tell us now her
10 name and where she is from. And go ahead and share your
11 comments with us.

12 VOICE: Okay. My name is Carrie [inaudible].

13 MS. PARADIS: Great. Welcome.

14 VOICE: Thank you. My comment and one of the
15 suggestions that I have is, I work with [inaudible].

16 And one of the comments I have is, most people
17 that get jobs, we immediately take their food stamps away
18 and close them out of the program.

19 And most people, they're going to need a 30-day
20 exception or 30 days when they can get their benefits so
21 they can get caught up on their rent or their health
22 insurance or phone bills and know that there's going to be a
23 little safeguard for one month.

24 So that would be one of my major comments working
25 in this program such as I do.

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1 MS. PARADIS: That's great. Have you got
2 anything else to share with us this afternoon?

3 VOICE: No. I think that will be it for right
4 now.

5 MS. PARADIS: Great. Thank you, Carrie.

6 VOICE: Thanks. Have a good day.

7 MS. PARADIS: Our next presenter here is Meghan
8 Speak.

9 MS. SPEAK: Hello.

10 MS. PARADIS: Hi.

11 MS. SPEAK: I am a single mother with two small
12 children. I am working steady 40 hours a week. And the
13 comment the speaker before me, Cindy McKenzie, I have been
14 in that situation of being 1 cent over.

15 And there is nothing more frustrating and more
16 unbelievably hard to deal with than for them to tell me,
17 Well, you are just a penny over the guideline, but we can't
18 help you, and we don't know what to tell you. Thank God for
19 food pantries, because they get you through.

20 The first thing that I would like to address is
21 the guidelines, that they are according to our gross income.
22 I don't live on gross income, I live on take-home pay.

23 I don't think it's reasonable to say that that's
24 where the guidelines should be set, because I don't get that
25 much money each month.

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1 The second thing I would like to say is that all
2 of our outgoing money should be taken into consideration.
3 My rent, my utilities, my car, my day care, anything that
4 has a monthly need of payment should be taken into
5 consideration. I can't not pay my utilities because I need
6 food. My kids need lights, too.

7 The third thing I would like to address is, I'd
8 like to see the caseworkers be more involved. I'd like to
9 see them look at each situation and go with what their needs
10 are versus we're all the same and these guidelines have to
11 fit us all, because we're not.

12 You know, if my car breaks down and someone
13 else's didn't, well, I'm going to need something else.

14 The fourth thing I'd like to address is I would
15 like to see the food pyramid being more of an influence on
16 how our food stamps are divided. Like the WIC Program, they
17 address each particular need. Not everybody is aware of the
18 nutritional needs of our children.

19 Some people do take advantage of it. This would
20 cut out that leeway to take advantage of the situation, and
21 it would also assist people who may not be aware of the
22 needs, giving some to each particular section in the food
23 pyramid stating the meats, the fruits and vegetables, the
24 grains, the dairies.

25 And I also would like to say, with the WIC, they

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1 made you buy everything, and these wonderful, nutritious
2 things that children don't eat.

3 (General laughter.)

4 MS. SPEAK: So I went through, and I got some
5 cereals. I'm not opposed to cheap brands. I buy bagged
6 cereal. But they are all basically the same. Some have --

7 and actually, this one has more calories, and it's a healthy
8 one that WIC, you know, wanted us to buy.

9 So I would like to say, you know, take into
10 consideration they're little, and they want marshmallows in
11 their cereal. So that's all. Thank you.

12 MS. PARADIS: Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Meghan. Our next
15 presenter is Paul Johnson.

16 MR. JOHNSON: I first want to thank you for the
17 opportunity to testify here. And I want to start out by
18 seconding the comments I heard from Loretta Pyles and from
19 Joe Hendrixson.

20 And I understand that you had a meeting this
21 morning with Theresa Banger, too, who is a Catholic Sister
22 that I've been working with for several years on Welfare
23 Reform in Kansas.

24 I've been a card carrying lobbyist and advocate
25 on poverty programs since the early 1980s.

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1 And really, boy, since we've started Welfare
2 abandonment in Kansas, we've just had a precipitous decline
3 in the number of people who are getting food stamps, and
4 it's a sad state of affairs.

5 Kansas is about 2-1/2 million people. If you
6 talk to SRS, they say the range of people living in poverty
7 has been from a high of 320,000 to 260,000 people.

8 Over the last 15 years we've had about 175,000
9 people roughly on the Food Stamp Program in Kansas. Since
10 October of '96, we have cut that number to 110,000. About a
11 third of the people who were getting food stamps in our
12 state are no longer getting them. And half of those
13 recipients that we've cut off this program are children.

14 And food stamps have been the largest child
15 nutrition program in our state for decades.

16 And this all comes at a time when we've seen no
17 change in the number of kids who are getting free school
18 lunch in the state of Kansas. Four years ago we had 106,000
19 getting it; last year we had 108,000.

20 And so we haven't seen a precipitous decline in
21 the number of kids getting free school lunches, but for some
22 reason the Food Stamp Program decline has been dramatic.

23 And I think it's -- you know, I guess we've won
24 the war nationally. When you took the Food Stamp Program
25 out of Welfare Reform, you left it as an Entitlement, and it

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1 was supposed to stand on its own. And that we were going to
2 Block Grant Welfare Reform and let the states handle it.

3 But as has been said before, run by the same
4 agency, the same rules and attitudes have percolated over
5 both programs.

6 And it's not very hard to understand how you cut
7 people off in our state for public assistance. I a mother
8 comes to an SRS office and she's working full-time, making
9 over \$4.10 an hour, she's not eligible for TAF -- we call it
10 TAF in Kansas. Clever. And if she refuses to look for
11 employment or take a job, then she's sanctioned off the
12 program.

13 And at least to your credit, USDA's credit, you
14 finally stepped up and said, SRS, stop sanctioning the kids
15 at the same time that you're spanking these working moms.

16 And so, I mean, you've got families in a Catch-
17 22. In a 2 or 3 percent unemployment economy, there's
18 always a nursing home job available, there's always a
19 cashier's job available. The reality is that these jobs
20 will never pay enough to pay expenses for these families.

21 And I would submit to you that, when you have
22 time, SRS has paid for a very comprehensive study on the
23 Kansas standard of need and self-sufficiency. The final
24 report came out in 1999.

25 And for a mere \$8, you can buy it from a

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1 publishing house at Kansas State University -- since we want
2 to make this available to everybody -- that tells us that
3 minimum wage employment will not carry single parent
4 households. And we need to get real about that at this
5 point.

6 And I think the other fact is, you spend time
7 looking at where job growth is going to happen in Kansas,
8 and then get out the charts from our Kansas Department of
9 Human Resources, which is our version of the Department of
10 Labor. Cashiers and salespeople are by far the greatest
11 growth in the next ten years of where employment is going to
12 happen.

13 So the Food Stamp Program is going to be that
14 much more vital in helping stabilize this service sector
15 economy that we're building in this country.

16 Now, so what needs to happen? Well, I think
17 there are three areas where I'd like to see increased effort
18 by SRS. One is to tie the Food Stamp Program much more
19 closely to the free school lunch program in our state.

20 As I've said, we've got 106,000 kids getting it.
21 We've only got 55,000 kids getting food stamps at this
22 point. There's quite a disparity there.

23 And we ought to have the school districts and SRS
24 exchanging lists and actively working to help those parents
25 understand that they're eligible for it.

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1 Secondly, when SRS wants to outreach, when they
2 want to get people into programs, such as we're seeing with
3 our version of the CHIP program called Health Wave, we bring
4 in thousands of kids. We've added 17,000 for the Medicaid
5 Program and 15,000 for Health Wave.

6 Are those families understanding that they're
7 eligible for food stamps? You know, what are we doing for
8 eligibility to help those families?

9 And thirdly, you know, poverty has not gone away
10 in our state. I mean, across the area offices for SRS
11 Department, they get 2,700 parents a month coming in and
12 asking for help.

13 Now, SRS's attitude is they like to turn away two
14 out of three of them. That's been their goal that they've
15 stated to our State Legislature. It's not particularly
16 compassionate in my mind.

17 But those 2,700 are coming at a time of serious
18 vulnerabilities, and we need good outreach at that point.
19 Those applicants need to understand that -- yes -- they may
20 be earning more than minimum wage, and they're not eligible
21 for TAF, but they would be eligible for food stamps.

22 And three or four last comments. One, I think
23 the move towards electronic benefit transfer was a great
24 idea, and I think it's really helped in Kansas to
25 destigmatize the program. And I applaud the efforts that

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1 SRS has made and USDA has made in the administration and
2 issuance of that program.

3 And I guess tied to that, you asked in your
4 series of questions here about name changes.

5 I think we should change the name from the Food
6 Stamp Program, which is out of date now, to a Food Security
7 Program, and tie it in the same way that we see Social
8 Security. It doesn't have the baggage, it doesn't have the
9 Welfare label that other Welfare programs do. And so I
10 think the Food Security Program would be a real step.

11 Lastly, a lot of this is about attitude. A lot
12 of this is about an uncaring feeling on the part of a lot of
13 our policy makers and the outreach workers that these folks
14 don't have a right to this, they're not deserving enough to
15 get assistance.

16 And somehow that's going to have to be
17 confronted, and that the right to eat and the right to new
18 nutrition is every bit as fundamental as health care in our
19 society. And we need to carry that much more forcefully.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Paul.

23 We have another caller. Is the caller on the
24 line? Hello.

25 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: Hello.

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1 MS. PARADIS: Hi.

2 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: This is Sheila Walsh-
3 McDonald.

4 MS. PARADIS: Great. Thank you, Sheila. Go
5 ahead with your comments.

6 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: Well, I'm calling regarding
7 one specific comment related to Welfare Reform and food
8 stamps in the state of Utah.

9 [Inaudible].

10 MS. PARADIS: Yes. It's a simple answer to your
11 question. And I assume your recommendation is that the
12 Agency do that monitoring?

13 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: That they do that
14 monitoring, but that there be -- [inaudible].

15 MS. PARADIS: That's great. Have you got any
16 additional comments to share with us this afternoon?

17 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: (No audible response.)

18 MS. PARADIS: Are you still there?

19 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: Yes, I am. I guess

20 [inaudible].

21 And although we take applications from all the
22 children that are eligible and interested for school lunch,
23 there is very little linkage for those families with other
24 health and low income programs.

25 And it would be helpful if we could use the

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1 school lunch application as linkages for other health
2 insurance programs such as the CHIP Program or Medicaid to
3 the Food Stamp Program to make sure that those families are
4 getting all the available resources that they need.

5 And I think it would behoove the Department of
6 Agriculture to work with the Department of Health and Human
7 Services to ensure that those children are getting all of
8 the programs that have been made available to them. So I
9 think the school lunch program could be a better linkage to
10 those other programs.

11 MS. PARADIS: Great. Do you have anything else
12 you would like to share?

13 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: No. Not at this time.

14 MS. PARADIS: Okay. We're grateful for your
15 call. Thank you so much.

16 MS. WALSH-McDONALD: Thank you.

17 MS. PARADIS: Our next presenter here is Kathy
18 Dysart.

19 MS. DYSART: Good afternoon. My name is Kathy
20 Dysart, and I'm from Des Moines, Iowa with the program
21 Expanded Food Nutrition Education.

22 I met a couple of other ladies that are with the
23 program in Missouri.

24 And I just want to try to explain that the Food
25 Stamp Program is a good benefit. I really helps out our

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1 clients.

2 But the only problem that I really have with it
3 is that their FIP money and their food stamps don't come at
4 the same time.

5 The client has to use their income to make ends
6 meet, the utilities, the bills, the household needs. They
7 have to use that income for their food until the stamps
8 come, so that kind of puts them behind.

9 There's other -- now I'm kind of nervous here.

10 MS. PARADIS: Don't be nervous.

11 MS. DYSART: Trying to get my point across. The
12 people that make the policies, they are not really putting
13 themselves in that person's shoes on how to make the ends
14 meet with the food stamps or with the VIP.

15 So the need is always there. They need it all
16 the time. The food stamps are a great thing.

17 Like I said, with my program, we are trying to
18 educate our clients with basic nutrition and how to make
19 that dollar stretch through our program.

20 And like a couple of ladies said before, is that
21 they use gross income and not net, and they don't live on
22 the gross, they live on the net.

23 And everybody should be treated differently, not
24 all dumped in one pot. Thank you.

25 MS. PARADIS: Thank you.

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1 (Applause.)

2 MS. PARADIS: Our next presenter is Father Pat
3 Tobin.

4 FATHER TOBIN: Hi. I'm Father Pat Tobin, 21
5 years with Harvesters Food Bank and then working with the
6 National America Second Harvest Food Bank.

7 And over the years we've seen the tremendous of
8 wasted food. We hear of 1,000 semi-trailer loads of
9 potatoes going to waste up in the Red River Valley. I can't
10 handle that, I really can't. Tons and tons of kidney and
11 pinto beans. So we're going to be building a new warehouse.
12 We move a million pounds of food a month now.

13 And so where does food stamps or security food
14 fit into there? I worked at a prison for eight years, and
15 we had 100 truckloads of bulk food going there.

16 And we spent 440 nights working on that, from
17 9:00 to 1:00 in the evenings -- the only place we could
18 find -- but to put that into packages and then bring it back
19 down to the food bank.

20 So the potential there for taking food that is
21 available, that's not going to be used, and to be able to
22 help there.

23 When we move the food commodities from the
24 warehouse to the agencies -- and we have 500 of those -- a
25 phenomenal amount of those recipients there are food stamps

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1 people. So more help is being used from your group to be
2 able to provide more transportation for that.

3 The possibility of, when we move the food
4 commodity items, loading the rest of that semi-trailer up
5 with food items from the food bank hitch-hiking on the same
6 bill of lading that you would have there.

7 Then, on the packaging, when my food industry
8 people say that 20 percent of food items is packaging -- or
9 20 percent of the cost is packaging, we could do that for
10 probably three or four cents, the packaging.

11 Within Kansas City here, there are 10,000 inmates
12 within 60 miles. That particular -- great, great industry,
13 and my seeing the experience there, the tremendous sense of
14 accomplishment of community service that they receive.

15 Most don't have jobs, or if it is a job, it's
16 emptying an empty wastebasket. I'm being critical there,
17 but the observation is there. We have a waiting giant
18 there.

19 A minister friend of mine said, Oh, Pat, you work
20 with the food banks, and I think it's wonderful that the
21 food stamps have eliminated hunger here in the United
22 States. He missed a word, helps eliminate hunger.

23 The other part in our looking at ways to get the
24 bulk food. Yes. But also the gardening possibilities. We
25 have 4,000 tomato plants that -- by the way, Bambi is

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1 messing with it now, so we need help there. But they
2 deliver a quarter of a million pounds to the homeless and to
3 the hungry every year.

4 That's a great potential for providing the
5 gardens and all of that, and with hundreds of volunteers in
6 the youth part, providing food.

7 And your point on the food markets, all of that,
8 there's great, great potential there.

9 The part of having the Food Stamp people coming
10 to the warehouse, to the food bank, on a periodic basis,
11 making that available and working with all the complications
12 that could be there that could be certainly simplified.

13 Okay. Thank you.

14 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much, Father Tobin.

15 Our next presenter is Lynn White.

16 MS. WHITE: Hello. I'm a food stamp recipient,
17 and I am a single mother of two.

18 And I guess my main problem is you don't
19 really -- we can't really get the help that we actually
20 need.

21 Like a lot of people said that, you know, you go
22 into the office, you're made to feel this big when you're
23 wanting your help. And then, when you try to send that back
24 to them, they want to tell you that you're rejected, you
25 can't get help.

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1 And also, I'm trying to figure out, why is it
2 that this country can sit up here and spend a million
3 dollars on a new building or a new bridge that's really not
4 needed, to do improvements to make it look prettier, when
5 you have a lot of homeless, hungry children in this country.

6 Then you want to send money to, you know, other
7 countries when you have the same problem here.

8 I mean, I understand that they're famished, and
9 they don't have the food or the income to do what they need
10 to do. But we need to help our country first.

11 Then, secondly, we have another problem where we
12 would pay -- this country pays immigrants to come over here.
13 They have nice cars when they get their money every month,
14 they have nice houses. I can't afford to get a nice house.
15 I can't afford to get a car. But then, these people are
16 driving brand new cars, the same year model, whatever year
17 it is.

18 Then, if someone from, say, Mexico tries to come
19 over here, they send them right back.

20 So I just want to know, you know, what's the
21 difference between the immigrants that you pay to come over
22 here -- and they get the food stamp benefits, they get the
23 FIP, they get the medical, but then, a Mexican person can't
24 get the same. Thank you.

25 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much, Lynn.

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1 Karen Burdick.

2 MS. BURDICK: Hello. My name is Karen Burdick,
3 and I come from a suburb of Des Moines, Iowa called Nevada.

4 It's nice to be here. Thank you for your time
5 and efforts in this important conference.

6 Five years or so ago, I was a food stamps
7 recipient. My spouse was abusive due to an anger problem,
8 and I found myself on my own with a one- and five-year-old.
9 My first stop, the DHS office for food stamps.

10 After filling out the necessary paperwork and
11 explaining my situation, I was given, that day, emergency
12 food stamps.

13 That was a great feeling to have received food
14 stamps that day. I love the Emergency Food Stamp Program.

15 On that positive note, a suggestion: I wish
16 that, at the same time I received my emergency food stamps,
17 that the staff could have examined my situation a little
18 more and referred me to other helpful sources.

19 For example, I had no transportation at the time.

20 It would have been nice for them to refer me to, for
21 example, the Wheels for Work Program.

22 I was not employed. A direction to the job coach
23 at YSS would have helped a lot.

24 To have given me resources and referrals would
25 have helped me get back on my feet sooner. I knew nothing

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1 and stayed on food stamps longer because of this.

2 Just a one-time referral to a nutritional program
3 such as Iowa State Extension Office provides could have
4 relieved a lot of the stress of just being on food stamps.

5 When I came back a year later, I still did not
6 have any information regarding resources. I was just asked
7 to watch a movie in this little room.

8 The staff did not seem as friendly. And in the
9 waiting room, there was only three of us. And they
10 announced it was time to go in in a very crabby,
11 unprofessional, discourteous way.

12 There was just three of us. Couldn't they have
13 said, Bill, Karen, Mary, we're ready for you to see our
14 movie now?

15 This brings me to professionalism. Not only
16 should there be a strict policy on DHS staff giving out
17 resources and referrals, but one on professionalism, as
18 well.

19 Whether it be mandatory monthly staff meetings
20 focusing on attitude and professionalism or some sort of
21 form being filled out by staff on their professionalism that
22 month, something needs to be done.

23 Lastly, I have been off the Food Stamp Program
24 for three years now. I have a wonderful job working for the
25 school system. I am also a volunteer to help people with

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1 the Community Cupboard. That's our emergency food
2 assistance.

3 People in Nevada know they can call me day or
4 night if they are out of food. We serve an average of 80
5 families per month. Our cupboard depletes more and more.
6 As food stamps aren't supplement enough, staff is not
7 inviting, and resources are not provided, the cupboard is
8 overstressed.

9 If the Government is not willing to make new
10 policies on resources and professionalism, then they need a
11 policy to support the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

12 I thank the DHS staff. I thank Congress, I thank
13 the legislators, and mostly I thank the food stamps
14 recipients for their dedication so far.

15 We need a resource and professionalism policy
16 passed. Thank you.

17 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much, Karen.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. PARADIS: Barb Ristance.

20 MS. RISTANCE: Good afternoon. I am a Family
21 Nutrition Program assistant. I teach nutrition to food
22 stamp recipients in Franklin County, which is a small county
23 in Iowa.

24 I would like to comment on one of the things that
25 she said. I think the referrals do need to be made at the

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1 DHS level.

2 So many times -- yes. I do get a few referrals,
3 but generally what they are referring to me are participants
4 that are so deeply in trouble that it's almost impossible
5 for me to do a whole lot to help them, because they are in
6 so many crises that we run from one crisis to the next. And
7 I deal with that before I deal with much teaching nutrition.

8 Knowing I was coming here today, I asked one of
9 my participants what she would like me to say about the Food
10 Stamp Program.

11 And her comment was, I always feel embarrassed
12 using them. I'm embarrassed at the grocery store not only
13 by the check-out clerks -- and she said, There are some that
14 are very good about it. There are others that are just
15 really crummy in the way they treat us.

16 But it's also the customers behind us in some
17 cases that give us dirty looks or act like, You shouldn't be
18 on that, there's something wrong with you.

19 She feels that they treat her like she's a bad
20 parent, she has been doing something wrong, just because
21 she's on food stamps, just because she needs the help.

22 On the positive line, she also felt that the
23 Family Nutrition Program focused on the positive. And even
24 though some of the material that we cover, she said, I
25 already knew, it was simply reiterating that, yes, I was

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1 doing something good, and yes, I am a smart person.

2 So she said, You make me feel like I'm doing
3 something right instead of something wrong.

4 A second question I asked her was how she felt
5 shopping at our local farmers market. I'm the market master
6 of that market, and we have accepted food stamps there for
7 quite a while.

8 We don't take a lot of them. I felt it was an
9 extra service to the food stamp customers, because we are
10 also in the Farmers Market WIC Program. And I felt this was
11 kind of a complement to that.

12 She said that she felt the WIC Program as well as
13 the food stamp acceptance at the market was a really
14 positive experience. She didn't feel like she needed to go
15 out of town there, whereas at the grocery store, she really
16 felt like, Maybe I need to go out of town and go someplace
17 else where they don't know me. Then I don't feel so bad.

18 But at the farmers market, she said she felt like
19 it was more of a positive experience. She was encouraged to
20 eat more fresh fruits and vegetables there because of the
21 program. And she really felt like spending some of her food
22 stamps there in addition to her WIC checks. Thank you.

23 MS. PARADIS: Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 MS. PARADIS: Shelly Dilks.

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1 MS. DILKS: One more from Iowa.

2 MS. PARADIS: Good.

3 MS. DILKS: There's a lot of us.

4 MS. PARADIS: Thank you for coming.

5 MS. DILKS: First of all, I just want to say
6 thank you for letting us come and speak today. This has
7 been a wonderful opportunity not only to speak but to listen
8 to what everybody else has been saying, too.

9 Before I came I pulled several people that I work
10 with as well as my families. I'm a Family Nutrition Program
11 assistant in Story County, Iowa, which houses Iowa State
12 University.

13 Many of my families report having enough food
14 stamps to feed their family; many, not all. They feel it's
15 a good safety net with nationwide standards not subject to
16 individual fluctuations state to state, which they also feel
17 is a real benefit.

18 Making nutrition a focus for healthy families was
19 seen as a real positive, as well as the nutrition education
20 part of the Food Stamp Program, helping families in their
21 efforts for self-sufficiency.

22 What my families wanted me to say is a little bit
23 different. They would like to see a transition system so
24 that they can prepare for a reduction in food stamps. It's
25 very frustrating to receive \$300 in food stamps one month

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1 and \$50 in food stamps the next because of some extra hours
2 that they worked two months prior.

3 They would like a simpler way to do reports for
4 monthly reports as well as the application process. Both of
5 those are seen as very intimidating and time consuming.

6 Benefits are cut when letters arrive late,

7 applications are difficult to understand, and it's very
8 difficult to access assistance when you do have a question.

9 Dealing with some staff can be stressful and
10 humiliating at times.

11 They would also like me to tell you that the
12 retro system makes life very difficult when they're living
13 month-to-month and it's not the same month that Human

14 Services is dealing with.

15 Ditto to everybody, they would like calculations
16 based on the net income. They live on a net income and not
17 a gross.

18 And they would like some way to figure out how to
19 have a car and be able to work and not have that affect

20 their assistance quite so much.

21 I work in my local community with a number of
22 agencies and coalitions. And one of the groups that I work
23 with, we try and do local policy. We deal with local policy
24 issues.

25 And while Welfare Reform rates are reported as

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1 positives -- numbers of people falling off the roles are
2 seen as a positive -- recidivism rates are not reported. In
3 Story County, we have a 43 percent recidivism rate within a
4 six-month time for food stamps. Those are our '98 figures.

5 And we would strongly encourage any changes that
6 would help reduce that recidivism rate.

7 I'm part of a local coalition attempting to
8 address food security issues in the community. This is a
9 group of people, our ministerial alliance, our WIC Program,
10 all sorts of food pantries.

11 We've provided gardening projects, food pantry
12 resource guide, and education for donors for food pantries.
13 The pantries have reported a marked increase in the numbers
14 of families accessing food and have welcomed this
15 educational effort.

16 We had one church in particular that routinely
17 gave out five pounds of flour, a can of shortening, and five
18 pounds of sugar and a dozen eggs, and that was it. That was
19 what they had, that was what was donated, and it was like,
20 So go home and bake cookies. Okay.

21 The food stamp participants in the Family
22 Nutrition Program in Story County have reported the biggest
23 benefits of the program are an increased use of planning
24 menus, not running out of their food stamps before the end
25 of the month. I've got moms that are just thrilled when

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1 they have a few left at the end of the month. Boy. That
2 means they can participate in the share program.

3 They're able to track their expenses more.
4 They're identifying that they're feeding their children
5 better, and they identify that their kids are healthier as a
6 result, which for me is a real positive.

7 And as families move off of assistance, there is
8 an increased pressure on the local communities to meet the
9 needs of these families with rent, food, and other
10 assistance, as this can be very difficult in small towns
11 without a variety of resources. And families don't have a
12 vehicle to access food resources in another community.

13 On a person note, I would like to see some more
14 promotion so that more eligible families can access food
15 stamps. Thank you.

16 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much.

17 (Applause.)

18 MS. PARADIS: Kim Greder.

19 MS. GREDER: Hello. I'm Kim Greder, another
20 Iowan from up north.

21 Anyway, I guess first off, like many of the
22 others have said, I thank you for inviting people to come
23 and share their stories with you and for taking the time to
24 listen.

25 And I think one of the things that as a country

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1 we're getting better add but we need to do more and more is
2 to listen to people and to truly listen to what they have to
3 say and their experiences and develop policy around that.

4 I have the privilege of working with many of the
5 women that you've just heard from. I coordinate the Food
6 Stamp Nutrition Education Program in Iowa.

7 And over the past year-and-a-half, I had the
8 opportunity to visit with 49 women throughout Iowa and
9 interview them on their experiences of what helps them feed
10 their family well and what makes it difficult for them to do
11 so.

12 All of these families were limited resource
13 families. Over 78 percent of them received food stamps, and
14 the others received WIC.

15 Some of the prevailing themes from the women that
16 I interviewed of what helps them feed their family well,
17 food stamps was at the top of their list. And they perceive
18 food stamps as their primary source of food for their
19 family. They do not perceive it as a supplementary source
20 of food. It is the primary source of food for their family.

21 Any other resource income that comes into that
22 household is used to pay other bills, to keep a roof over
23 their head, to put clothing on their children's back. Other
24 income from the household does not go to food.

25 And so with that I think what it tells us is how

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1 vital the Food Stamp Program is to helping families achieve
2 food security. And some of the families who receive food
3 stamps still are not food secure.

4 Even with the amount of food stamps they receive,
5 many of them, as one woman put how she plans her meals, she
6 looks at the money she has from food stamps, she knows where
7 she can get free bakery items, she knows all the pantries in
8 town and what time they're open and what day. And she knows
9 different resources she can use to put her meals together.

10 And so with that, I guess, to praise the Food
11 Stamp Program. It plays a vital role. And I think anything
12 we can do to continue to strengthen it in this country is
13 very, very important.

14 Other themes that came from the interviews I had
15 with families was, we heard much about Welfare to Work with
16 the legislation.

17 And the impact that's had on families was, many
18 families said -- and one woman in particular -- Okay, so now
19 I'm making 6.20 an hour. My food stamps are cut. I am
20 feeding my family worse now than before I had a job.

21 And in addition to that, as we know, that
22 individual needs to have transportation to get to a job,
23 they need to have child care.

24 And when we think of -- for those of us who are
25 not in poverty and we know the stress that we feel in our

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1 daily lives from what we deal with, and then, when we think
2 of the complexity of families who are continually short on
3 money and the stress that that puts on their lives, as we
4 know, the stress is much more compounded.

5 And with that, getting to a job very much is not
6 as easy for someone in poverty than it is for myself. And I
7 can afford quality, reliable day care. Sure, I have to
8 search around, but I can find it, and I can pay for it. And
9 for many of our families, that's not an option for them.

10 The other theme that came through the interviews,
11 when we interviewed families, we never asked them about
12 nutrition education, what role that played for them in
13 feeding their family, but it came out strong.

14 And what came out strong was the sense of social
15 support that they felt from the paraprofessional who took
16 the time to care about them and didn't come in to check
17 their food cupboard to see if they had food or if they were
18 abusing their kids or if they were abiding by program
19 guidelines, but came in because they truly cared about them.

20 And they said, How can I help you feed your
21 family? What are the goals that you want for your family?
22 And stuck by them, side by side, and didn't say, Okay,
23 you've had six lessons, we cut you off, we move on to
24 another family. They stuck with the family. They let the
25 family drive the program.

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1 And with that came a strong sense of self-
2 advocacy and families feeling that they had a sense of
3 control in their life, and somebody was helping them build
4 that sense of control.

5 So thank you very much.

6 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. PARADIS: Another Iowa presenter, I think,
9 Patricia Jones.

10 MS. JONES: Hello. I'm from the Family Nutrition
11 Program, also. I have taught family nutrition in Iowa for
12 five years in a very rural area, which many farmers and very
13 low income families live in our area.

14 What I found over the years of teaching is that a
15 lot of our families may have enough food stamps, but how
16 they're spending them, they're really having a problem with
17 that.

18 I've gone grocery shopping with a lot of our
19 families and just teaching them how to stretch those food
20 dollars, also how to pick out a variety of foods.

21 Sometimes in our area fruits and vegetables may
22 not be plentiful in the wintertime as they are in the
23 summertime. So you know, getting fruits and vegetables for
24 children are real important.

25 I've had one family that I was working with when

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1 I first started that their children -- they had five
2 children in their family, and they only ate fruits and
3 vegetables one day a month, because they bought the fruits
4 and vegetables the first of the month with their food
5 stamps.

6 And they were gone in like one day, because the
7 children were like, you know, this is a real treat. This
8 was like candy to them.

9 And one thing I would like to see Food Stamps do,
10 and something that the young mother had mentioned earlier,
11 is maybe have just part of the food stamps, you know, kind
12 of like WIC, in certificates saying that this is what you
13 can buy as fruits and vegetables so that some families
14 would, you know, be able to do that.

15 I'd like to see the whole food pyramid -- that
16 would be great -- divided all out. I think families, that
17 way they would know, you know, they need the variety of
18 foods for healthy children.

19 I also work with a program called the Nest
20 [phonetic] Program in Iowa. And it has several Nest
21 programs for prenatal moms that are pregnant and going to
22 have babies.

23 And we try to really focus on nutrition before
24 the baby is even born. And we find that that's real
25 important.

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1 And again, it goes back to the variety of foods.

2 And many of those are on food stamps and need to kind of
3 know what is, you know, what's on the pyramid, what do they
4 need to be eating the most of?

5 And again, it goes back to -- I find fruits and
6 vegetables again is a lot that they don't eat. And

7 especially for kids, that's something that they see that
8 their parents are eating those, of course, they're not going
9 to as much.

10 So if they see their parents drinking the pop and
11 eating the chips, that's what they'll eat. So --

12 And again, it goes back to the shopping skills,
13 making a food list. And hopefully in the Family Nutrition

14 Program we are teaching them how to do that. So thank you.

15 MS. PARADIS: Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 MS. PARADIS: Did we take care of everybody from
18 Iowa in that group?

19 VOICE: No. Not yet.

20 MS. PARADIS: Well, next on our list is Vicki
21 Ensz.

22 MS. ENSZ: Good afternoon.

23 MS. PARADIS: Hi.

24 MS. ENSZ: First of all, I applaud your efforts
25 to gather the community together and to receive input from

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1 all of us about the Food Stamp Program and just your
2 openness in soliciting ideas on how to improve the program.

3 I am the Program Director for an all-women's
4 grass roots organization that's in Johnson County, Kansas.
5 And it's called Mother to Mother.

6 This is a national program, and we have 20 or
7 these programs sprinkled throughout the state of Kansas.
8 And right now there are efforts to initiate this program on
9 the Missouri side, in Jackson County.

10 MS. PARADIS: Vicki, I'm going to ask you to step
11 just a little bit closer to the microphone. We're getting a
12 bit of feedback. And the closer you get, I think, it will
13 minimize that.

14 MS. ENSZ: Okay. This program matches up women
15 from different economic backgrounds to come together for
16 friendship, emotional support, mentoring, and problem
17 solving.

18 There is one woman from a low income background
19 that is matched with two women for a more secure economic
20 income background.

21 I have been at this program for almost six years,
22 and I have worked with many struggling families, many who
23 have received food stamps and many who have not met the
24 qualifications.

25 In my observation, the biggest barrier or

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1 complaint that I hear in working with these women in my
2 ministry is that -- now, I can only speak for the Olathe
3 Area SRS Office -- but that working with the SRS personnel
4 is a very unpleasant experience.

5 There's lots of red tape and bureaucracy plus
6 discourteous treatment, and this does chase off potential
7 clients.

8 The view of the women that I work with is that
9 the feelings of disrespect and lack of helpfulness is
10 negative enough that they would choose to just distance
11 themselves from this program.

12 On the good side, though, I do feel that our area
13 SRS office in Olathe does recognize that they have to do
14 some fence mending and that they need to rebuild trust and
15 better customer relations. And I do think that they are
16 attempting to make that effort with an outreach and kind of
17 a promotional campaign.

18 Any efforts to build strength an trust and
19 respect will go a long way.

20 Lastly, there is a book that is on the market
21 right now. It's called Framework for Understanding Poverty,
22 by Ruby Payne. And it's a book that I think would be an
23 exceptionally wonderful opportunity for a lot of SRS people
24 to be able to study and learn about in some kind of an in-
25 service training. So I throw that out as a possibility.

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1 Thank you.

2 MS. PARADIS: Thank you very much.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. PARADIS: Our next presenter is Mary Lou
5 Devonshire. Mary Lou, you might try raising the microphone
6 again.

7 MS. DEVONSHIRE: Okay.

8 MS. PARADIS: There you go.

9 MS. DEVONSHIRE: Okay. My name is Mary Lou, and
10 I'm here with Mother to Mother, too. But I'm not a director
11 or anything. I'm one of the moms that's a support mom.

12 And I'm a single mom, I have three kids, and I've
13 never been a recipient of food stamps. And that doesn't

14 mean there hasn't been a need there. There has been a need,
15 but I have never made it through the application process.

16 Part of my difficulty is that I'm struggling with
17 depression, and so sometimes I'm functioning and sometimes
18 I'm not. And so it's kind of an on again-off again crisis
19 situation.

20 And it's like I don't fit in the structure of the
21 administration for the program, it seems like. So I'm one
22 of those people probably that falls through the cracks.

23 And we do manage to scrape by, so I guess we
24 don't get very much attention. But it does mean that
25 nutrition does fall through in our household, and it does

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1 mean that, when our family gets into crisis, we go so far
2 down that it takes a lot more to come back up than it would
3 if we could get the help before things went so sour.

4 And so that's what I'd like to address, is the
5 whole issue of why does it have to be that you have to reach
6 such desperate straits before you can even --

7 Actually, I never knew that I could have gotten
8 food stamps without having to also qualify for cash
9 assistance. Every time I went into the program, or often
10 when I tried, I didn't qualify for cash assistance, so I
11 figured I couldn't get any kind of help at all, and nobody
12 ever told me I could get any other kind of help.

13 So I would leave, and most of the time I'd find
14 that I had gone through a rather rigorous application
15 process, where they wanted to know everything about my
16 existence, where I had to find documentation, you know,
17 anywhere that I could.

18 And if you are struggling in a crisis and under
19 stress, lots of times your documentation just isn't there.

20 I can remember my car fell apart, and the repair
21 shop took it from me because I couldn't pay them for it.
22 And SRS wanted proof where my car -- where the asset of my
23 car was, and I couldn't give that to them, so I couldn't
24 finish the process.

25 I can remember that at one time I had to fulfill

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1 the paternity process, and I couldn't deal with the
2 hostility of the father involved, so I couldn't finish the
3 process.

4 And in all that time, then, our family situation
5 declined and declined and declined. And I mean, luckily
6 enough, I've been one of the people who has been able to
7 pull it back together again to a degree. But I know lots of
8 people just suffer and struggle, and I wish that didn't have
9 to be that way.

10 And for me recently, I hit another financial
11 crisis. And I thought -- I knew I was coming here, and I
12 thought, Go back there and try again, you know, at SRS. Try
13 just for food stamps -- because I was coming here -- and see
14 what happens this time.

15 And I tried to go in with a clean slate, not with
16 the -- I did have quite a burden to try and go there,
17 because I could remember the negativity of the process
18 before. Because I do have to say the time that I went
19 before I did meet with a lot of hostile attitude. I did
20 meet with --

21 I mean, if you're feeling bad anyway, any kind of
22 negative nuance that's there, you're going to feel it,
23 because you're not usually -- unless you're some sort of
24 sham artist, which I don't think most of the people that go
25 there are -- you're not usually going there by choice.

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1 You're usually going there because you have to, and you
2 don't want to, and it's embarrassing.

3 And I had met with a lot of attitude before, so I
4 really didn't want to go back again. But I have to say that
5 this time the caseworker that I did meet with -- his name
6 was Jim Harmon -- he was extremely pleasant to me, and that
7 was a real plus for me.

8 And I did struggle again with the paperwork only
9 to find out by talking to Jim halfway through that struggle
10 that part of it I didn't have to deal with since I was only
11 applying for food stamps, and I was happy to hear about
12 that.

13 And I still am only halfway through the process,
14 though, because it's so time consuming.

15 And that was another thing. We're in crisis now
16 financially. We don't have the money for food now. And it
17 was really strange, because he asked for all these bank
18 records and all this other stuff, and I brought it all.

19 And my bank records did show there was \$700 in
20 the bank, but there weren't \$700 in the bank. And he said,
21 You're going to have to bring me proof that all that money
22 is gone, you know -- well, not all of it, but basically you
23 can only have assets, I think, of 2,000 total, including
24 your car.

25 And I also had to count my daughter's little bank

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1 account that she has put together by her baby-sitting money
2 and, you know, anything she got from family.

3 And I don't think that should count, you know,
4 because I'm not going to use her money to feed the family.
5 I'm sorry. I'm just not going to. Maybe I should be more
6 desperate than that to qualify. But I was unwilling to do
7 that. But that counts as part of the assets.

8 And my car, though it's a '95 Windstar, which
9 sounds like a great vehicle, it has 118,000 miles on it. I
10 got it at a bargain, and there was a reason. And I do owe
11 that whole amount on it.

12 And I just took it out of the shop again, and I
13 do owe on my credit card an additional \$500 on it. And I
14 just got done charging a \$400 bill on it. So it's not like
15 it's really an asset, but they're going to count it as an
16 asset, you know.

17 (General laughter.)

18 MS. DEVONSHIRE: And so more than likely, if it's
19 counted as an asset and her bank account is counted as an
20 asset and I get my child support check in the bank at the
21 wrong time, I won't qualify for any help.

22 And I am -- I just started working again, you
23 know. And hopefully that situation will hang in there long
24 enough where I'll be able to get over this bump.

25 But it just seems like if I could be helped

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1 sooner, a little bit better, we wouldn't sink down so far,
2 and then maybe I wouldn't be in with the numbers that need
3 so much help, you know, and we could take people out of that
4 role by keeping them from getting down there.

5 And that's the main point I wanted to make.

6 Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Mary Lou. We have
9 another caller, Mr. Harris.

10 MR. HARRIS: [Inaudible].

11 MS. PARADIS: We appreciate that comment. Have
12 you got anything else you would like to share with us this
13 afternoon?

14 MR. HARRIS: No.

15 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

16 MR. HARRIS: Thank you.

17 MS. PARADIS: Our next presenter, then, is Maggie
18 Stull.

19 MS. STULL: I came with Pat and all the rest of
20 the Iowans today.

21 I was a participant in the Best Beginnings
22 Program and the Have a Healthy Baby Program. And I would
23 just like to say thank you for offering that. They didn't
24 have those types of programs when I had my other two
25 children.

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1 So it was an asset, because I never thought about
2 it before, but someone earlier said that you don't always
3 realize you're doing something right until you have somebody
4 there to tell you that you are.

5 So also I would like to say that I have been on
6 the Food Stamp Program before. It came as a great help to
7 me when I was separated from my first husband. He felt no
8 need to pay any child support, so it was hard to support two
9 children. And I'm just glad that there are programs like
10 that out there for people.

11 Right now I am applying for food stamps because,
12 although I'm not what you would consider a working person, I
13 feel like that I am a working person, because I am trying to
14 raise three children. A lot of people don't think that's
15 good enough.

16 But in the area that I live in, there's not a lot
17 of good day care services. About the best paying job you
18 can get is like \$10 an hour. Once you pay 3-something, 4-
19 something an hour for three children, take the taxes out and
20 your insurance, there's not much left.

21 So I really don't understand why I would have to
22 submit my children to being raised by people they don't know
23 just so I can not make any money.

24 (General laughter.)

25 (Applause.)

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1 MS. STULL: But one thing that my husband, he is
2 very hard working. He has been the best to my other two
3 children that I could ever ask for.

4 But we're running into problems, and we have
5 personal insurance. And I'm worried that the Food Stamp
6 Program is not going to help us because, out of every two-
7 week check -- it looks good, because it says he makes \$700-
8 and-some every two weeks.

9 But out of that \$700-and-some, before they take
10 the taxes, they take \$130 for insurance, and that just
11 really doesn't leave us a whole lot left to -- and we don't
12 have like a new car. I mean, we're lucky we're still
13 driving the one we have.

14 And it's very frustrating for him. And I try --
15 I mean, I really don't want to go get food stamps because,
16 like a lot of people said, you're treated differently.

17 So it's just the fact that it's a good program,
18 and there are people out there that are going to abuse it,
19 but there are going to be people that abuse everything in
20 life.

21 And I would just hate to see that those certain
22 people ruin it for everyone else, especially those of us who
23 are really trying.

24 I mean, I'm not sitting at home not doing
25 anything. I'm trying to raise three respectful, good

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1 children that are not going to go out and do things in the
2 world that I don't want them to do. I'm trying to raise
3 them the right way.

4 And not that I'm saying that day care wouldn't do
5 that. But I know -- I've worked in a day care, and I know
6 how many children there are to each day care provider, and
7 they don't get the individual attention that when you can
8 take care of your own.

9 So again I'd like to say thank you for having the
10 programs like Best Beginnings and -- because I have learned
11 different things that I didn't know that Pat had told me,
12 like how to make my own instant oatmeal a cheaper way.

13 And if I hadn't been involved in that program, I
14 never would have met Pat. And she's a very nice, wonderful
15 person, and I never would have been able to have the
16 opportunity to come down here and share my feelings with
17 you. So thank you very much.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Maggie.

20 Our next presenter is William Hurgrave.

21 MR. HURGRAVE: All right. Thank you. What I
22 wanted to -- I didn't have any idea what was going on down
23 here today, but I saw that it was some kind of a Food Stamp
24 thing.

25 And so I want you to know that I'm a musician,

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1 and the business is good sometimes, and sometimes it isn't.
2 So this winter was a tough one. On 3/10, I got a notice
3 that said was eligible for expedited food stamps. 4/7 says
4 they will be available soon. That's a month. Right? Okay.
5 I've got all this stuff here. Yes.

6 And then, okay, so that went on. I finally got
7 them for a couple of months. And she said, Well, you're
8 over 60. You don't have to look for a job. I said, Oh,
9 good, you know. I'm home free.

10 Anyway, I've taken my -- for what it's worth,
11 I've taken my act to the streets. I'm playing on street
12 corners, and I'm catching up. I really am. I've paid some
13 utilities lately.

14 And anyway, here's 6/26. I don't qualify for
15 expedited food stamps, but I may still qualify for food
16 stamps, 6/26. And I called them last week, and she's still
17 working on the case.

18 I'm just wondering, you know, how big a case am
19 I? Don't ask my mother that, you know.

20 (General laughter.)

21 MR. HURGROVE: So that's basically what I wanted
22 to say. It just feels like the wheels are clogged in this
23 process.

24 EBT is a wonderful thing. I did this once about
25 three years ago, and I had no problems. That's when they

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1 had the actual monies.

2 And then, one day about six months ago, I got a
3 card, an EBT card, and I didn't know what it was. I thought
4 it was some kind of insurance card or an advertisement. And
5 I kept it.

6 And it turns out that somehow they had taken my
7 old food stamp thing and sent me a card which I didn't even
8 qualify for. So it seems like there's some confusion,
9 bureaucracy, or whatever you want to call it.

10 And that's about it. Thank you.

11 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, William.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. PARADIS: You're from here in Kansas City?

14 MR. HURGROVE: Yes. I live in the now blighted
15 Westport area.

16 (General laughter.)

17 MS. PARADIS: Our next presenter is Glen Koenen.

18 MR. KOENEN: Good afternoon. I'm Executive
19 Director of a charity called Circle of Concern in Valley
20 Park, Missouri. And I'm here today as Secretary of the St.
21 Louis Metro Food Pantry Association.

22 We are a trade organization, a working together
23 group that form more than 400 food pantries in the metro St.
24 Louis area.

25 The first thing to remember, please, is that

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1 right now in St. Louis food pantries are feeding more people
2 than food stamps. Our 400 member pantries are feeding more
3 than 300,000 people every month, whereas food stamps,
4 because of cuts, are now down to about 225,000 people.

5 At the same time, we are not on the same scale as
6 Food Stamps. Our 400 pantries with thousands of volunteers
7 are struggling to collect \$50 million worth of food a year
8 to give out.

9 By comparison, Food Stamps are giving people more
10 than \$180 million worth of food in the metro St. Louis area.

11 We are very concerned that, as Welfare rolls drop
12 and as pressure comes to balance the budget and so on, that
13 people will think the war on poverty has been won, and they
14 will eliminate the Food Stamp Program. We need the Food
15 Stamp Program.

16 That's not to say it's perfect. Among the
17 problems we're seeing in the St. Louis area: Number 1,
18 access to get food stamps. As the gentleman just said, the
19 process does not work the way it should.

20 We have caseworkers in Missouri in the eastern
21 part of our state who are responsible for more than 300
22 families.

23 When a caseworker has 300 families, they can't
24 remember the names of the families, much less process the
25 paperwork in a timely manner.

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1 Another problem we have is that we're seeing more
2 and more working poor people who have jobs but can't get
3 into the Food Stamp office without taking off work.

4 The Food Stamp office is open till 4:45 Monday
5 through Friday. The loan department at banks in the St.
6 Louis area are open on Saturday mornings and at least one
7 evening a week. You can get a home loan at 6:00 in the
8 evening. You can't get food stamps at 6:00 in the evening.

9 We've seen that problem. We've been fighting it
10 for years. We haven't seen a change.

11 We're always promised they're going to look at
12 it. Well, they now have looked at it for at least 17 years
13 that I've been around, and we haven't gotten to an answer
14 yet.

15 I'm also concerned because a lot of working poor
16 families seem to fall out in the system. At my food pantry,
17 we use the 130 percent of poverty income guideline, gross
18 income, the same as the Food Stamp Program does.

19 In July we surveyed all 548 active families in
20 our system; 48 percent get food stamps, 52 percent do not.

21 We give out food stamp applications. The
22 problems seem to be the distance to the office and the fact
23 that you have to miss work to get there.

24 I had one lady who told me two years ago she used
25 seven vacation days keeping her food stamp case current,

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1 four days for her quarterly recertifications.

2 And then, when they went to the EBT cards, twice
3 they messed up her EBT card. She had to make three
4 different trips to an office that is not accessible by
5 busses from most of St. Louis County, to get her EBT card
6 and keep her case current. That's just not right.

7 Another problem we see, especially among working
8 families, is the stigma associated with food stamps. And
9 that was borne out this last weekend.

10 There's an Associated Press story where Secretary
11 William Cohen, the Defense Secretary, is ashamed that he has
12 soldiers who have to get food stamps. His answer is not to
13 pay his soldiers more. It is to create a parallel system
14 where they would give a special food voucher to the
15 soldiers.

16 Well, if a member of the administration doesn't
17 think food stamps are good enough for his people, what
18 chance do we have of convincing the general public that
19 there is a need for food stamps?

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. KOENEN: Also, it's very important to note
22 that food stamps were seen many years ago as a temporary
23 program, something people would be on for a short term. And
24 that's true. Many people come on and off food stamps.

25 But our problem is we've taken the approach that

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1 food stamps are to supplement other resources. I can tell
2 you most families who get food stamps also go to food
3 pantries.

4 And right now in Missouri our problem is not the
5 maximum food stamps amount. That's pretty close to the
6 Thrifty Food Plan. Our problem is that the average benefit
7 is much lower.

8 Right now for a family of four the average
9 benefit is about \$285 a month. You cannot feed a family of
10 four in Missouri, even going to farmers markets and with a
11 garden out back, on \$285 a month.

12 If you go to a food pantry, you're probably going
13 to get, if you're lucky, a week's supply of food, more
14 likely a three-day supply of food.

15 And so we have a lot of families who are
16 experiencing long-term malnourishment because they're not
17 getting the right foods at the right time.

18 I was happy to hear that in Iowa they still have
19 a lot of nutritional counseling going on connected with food
20 stamps. We've lost a lot of that in parts of Missouri.

21 We used to have ladies who would come into the
22 food pantries and show people how to prepare meals. We've
23 lost that.

24 Our other problem is, as we see more and more
25 working families, these people are like all of us, they only

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1 have an hour or so to prepare dinner.

2 We no longer give out tomato paste at my food
3 pantry. We give out Ragu spaghetti sauce or canned
4 spaghetti sauce because low income families shouldn't have
5 to spend three hours in the kitchen cooking dinner just
6 because they're poor.

7 We need to get more nutritional counseling
8 connected with food stamps, and we also need to help the
9 people realize how to spend their money properly.

10 And finally, one thing for the future. Please,
11 please make sure that everyone knows changing the name would
12 not change what's good about food stamps, nor would it
13 change what's bad.

14 The good is the fact that we're feeding a lot of
15 people, and we have eliminated a lot of hunger in America.
16 If we change the name, it may be trendy, like we did when we
17 went from AFDC to TANF and all the other new acronyms, but
18 it's still the same program.

19 Let's be honest and say Food Stamps are a
20 program, food stamps are the best way we have of helping our
21 neighbors feed each other.

22 And let's please do what we can to get rid of the
23 stigma so, when a family goes to the store, they don't feel
24 like a second class shopper because they have food stamps.
25 Thank you.

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1 (Applause.)

2 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Glen. We're going to --
3 before we go to Karen Elliott, who is next on my list, we
4 are going to hear from Sally Vivian. Sally, would you like
5 to come on down?

6 MS. VIVIAN: Hello. First I would like to say
7 I'm glad to be here.

8 And I'm going to give you a little -- I'm a
9 former food stamp recipient. I no longer receive food
10 stamps.

11 But during the ten years that I received food
12 stamps and other assistance -- I'm a single mother with four
13 children -- I got a job, and I had a little ten-year-old
14 car.

15 Well, two years into the job, I had to upgrade
16 because I had over 250,000 miles on that little raggedy car.
17 And I live in Jackson County, and I worked in Johnson
18 County. Johnson County has no public transportation, so a
19 car was essential to my working.

20 So one of the local car dealers was offering X
21 amount. If you could get the car in, they would get you a
22 new car.

23 So I got the little car in on a prayer and a
24 song, and I got me a nice new little Toyota. And I got a
25 Tercel, a stripped down Tercel with no AM/FM, no cassette

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1 player, no air conditioning, two-door car with the little
2 hatch.

3 My Food Stamp worker told me that if I wanted to
4 continue receiving my food stamps, I had to make a choice
5 between the food stamps or the car.

6 I took a second job. That meant my two older
7 kids had to baby-sit their younger sister and brother until
8 I got home, around 10:30 or 11:00, five nights a week.

9 Teenagers and young people shouldn't be left
10 alone for prolonged periods of time. I would leave at 7:00
11 in the morning, get in at 11:30. So of course the kids did
12 get into some problems.

13 But with food stamps there was another issue.

14 During the summer months, the quantity that I received
15 declined, and that's when all four of these children were
16 home all day alone. And they had very little to eat.

17 Another problem I have with food stamps is with
18 the elderly. My mother is elderly. She lives in an
19 assisted living environment along with probably another 2-
20 or 300 people in that same building.

21 These elderly people are offered \$10 a month in
22 food stamps. They go over to SRS, they sit over there all
23 day for that \$10 worth of food stamps.

24 Most of them, the medications that they are on
25 are not covered by Medicaid or the HMO that they are

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1 currently on. So X amount of food money, other than this
2 \$10 food stamps, has to go on medicine.

3 Each month they have to make a choice, Am I going
4 to get my medication or am I going to eat?

5 And I think for the elderly of this country that
6 is very, very shameful.

7 For the young parents -- not all of the single
8 young parents intended to be single parents. I didn't start
9 off to be a single parent, but it happened that way.

10 And so I think you need to reevaluate how you
11 allow the stamps, because if you want a person to become
12 self-sufficient, she's going to need the tools that's
13 necessary, and that is a reliable mode of transportation.

14 I'm not saying go out and buy a Mercedes or a new
15 SUV. But let's face it, a ten-year-old car, what can you do
16 with it? Every time you get paid, you're fixing the car, so
17 you can't feed the kids.

18 Well, if you don't have reliable transportation,
19 you have no job. So you're back to Square One. So I think
20 we need to look into that. Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Sally. Karen Elliott.

23 MS. ELLIOTT: I'm Karen Elliott, and I coordinate
24 the Family Nutrition Program here in Missouri. And I'd like
25 to address your issue in just a minute.

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1 I wanted to just share a few things with you, as
2 well. I think the Extension Service has already shown the
3 importance of nutrition education. And we really find that
4 important today as you realize that youth do not get
5 information about how to make good choices at home because
6 parents don't.

7 Schools don't have home economics, family
8 consumer science type classes anymore. And even in WIC,
9 when they go to WIC, they have reduced their education to a
10 minimum.

11 So people don't know how to use the money that
12 they get from food stamps, and they're frequently going to
13 spend it on high priced items really not knowing any
14 difference. And it's important to us to help people make
15 better choices so that that money can go farther.

16 What I really wanted to share with you, too, is
17 that a lot of people say, Well, does it make a difference?
18 Do people really listen? And I just wanted to share a
19 letter that we got just today, actually, from a family.

20 It was a lady who had been a part of one of our
21 staff's nutrition classes at a WIC center. She wrote to us
22 that she had moved, she was now traveling with her husband,
23 and they no longer had a home, she was living in a hotel.
24 And all they had was a cooler, and so they were having to
25 eat out.

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1 But she would like our assistant to come follow
2 her and help her make wiser choices while she was in a
3 store.

4 And I think that's pretty impressive for someone
5 to write a letter requesting that that service come on.
6 That just rarely happens, but it shows that we are
7 effective.

8 And what I wanted to ask with you today is really
9 an answer to what the man before us had said. He said, We
10 used to have nutrition educators in the food pantries.

11 We have very few nutrition educators in the food
12 pantries anymore because we are funded to work with mostly
13 public agencies. That's where we get our match, that's
14 where we get our money. And so we are spending more and
15 more of our time working with youth and in schools, which
16 has its merits. I have no complaint about that.

17 But we're missing the families like this lady.
18 If we follow her, we get no reimbursement for working with
19 her. We have to work in a school during the day to make up
20 that money.

21 We need to be able to work with private agencies.
22 We need to be able to work with -- we don't even work with
23 the food stamp audiences, because they also do not provide
24 us any income.

25 And so if we're funded to work with these people,

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1 why are we missing where they get their biggest support?
2 Those are the agencies where the people come in and are
3 willing and ready to work with us.

4 So please work with us so that we can work where
5 our help is really needed. Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Karen.

8 Our next presenter is Pam Jacob.

9 MS. JACOB: I'm not quite this tall, but I'll try
10 to stand up a little bit.

11 Okay. My name is Pam Jacob, and I am from the
12 State of Kansas. I administer the Food Stamp Program.

13 I have dealt with the Food Stamp Program in
14 Kansas for 20 years, and I have seen tons of improvements.

15 So first off I want to -- I appreciate all the
16 comments that I've heard today, because I've heard some
17 really wonderful ones, and I've heard some ones that have
18 concerned me greatly. And other staff from SRS are here,
19 and they're taking notes.

20 So the first thing that I want to say is that I
21 really do believe in the Food Stamp Program. And like I
22 said, I've seen great improvements.

23 I started out as a worker. I've been where some
24 of you have been. I've been a caseworker, I was a
25 supervisor, and now I'm an administrator.

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1 And the thing that I want to mention, too -- and
2 I don't want it to be forgotten -- and that is that there is
3 good workers and there is bad workers in any department
4 anywhere.

5 But the caseworkers that currently deal with
6 clients, most of them have -- they administer the Food Stamp
7 Program, the TANF Program, numerous Medicaid programs, the
8 Child Care Program, and on and on. It's a very difficult
9 job, and I think they try to do their best.

10 But the thing that the Food Stamp Program can do
11 to help them is to simplify the Food Stamp Program. Let
12 us -- and I think the program has made great strides, I
13 really do.

14 And I have to compliment USDA, because like I
15 said, I've been with it for so long that I've seen the
16 improvements, I really have. And it's a lot better now than
17 it was ten, 15 years ago, it really is.

18 But I think we need to continue that improvement.
19 It needs to be simpler because caseworkers do have -- they
20 have big caseloads. I think the worker from Missouri
21 mentioned 300-some families, and that's the normal. And
22 they have 300 families, and they have all those programs.

23 So we really need to simplify their job. The big
24 one is to simplify budgeting of income. That's been
25 mentioned here today, so I would just reiterate that one.

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1 Exempt one vehicle; can't say that enough. And
2 we've already heard that testimony.

3 One of my main concerns is the elderly and
4 disabled on food stamps. I don't think that we serve that
5 population well enough, and we don't give them enough. The
6 \$10 obviously is not a great benefit.

7 When I asked the caseworkers in Kansas for ideas
8 about ways to improve the Food Stamp Program, one of the
9 ones that came in -- and I know that this has also gone to
10 USDA before, and I understand that it's something that would
11 require legislation, so I would ask that USDA push this one,
12 and that would be a standard medical deduction for the
13 elderly.

14 The current medical deduction on the Food Stamp
15 Program is very complicated. And not only is it complicated
16 for the recipient, it's complicated for the caseworker.

17 They have to get tons of verification and, you
18 know, on and on and on. And the workers are frustrated, the
19 elderly just give up because it's so difficult.

20 And I think we need to recognize that all elderly
21 have medical expenses. I mean, it's just a fact of life.

22 So why do we make it so difficult for the elderly
23 to prove that medical deduction? Let's just give them a
24 standard medical deduction. And I think that would increase
25 their benefits and would make life a lot easier for the

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1 elderly.

2 I would ask that USDA support the APHSA Food
3 Stamp Reform agenda. This agenda has been carefully crafted
4 with caseworkers' and consumers' interests in mind.

5 We would ask that you continue supporting
6 nutrition education. I was really glad to see all the
7 people from Iowa here. The Family Nutrition people from
8 Kansas aren't here today, but I'll speak for them because I
9 work closely with them, and I think what they do is
10 wonderful.

11 And we have a nutrition network, we have the
12 Family Nutrition Program, again. And we have 105 counties
13 in Kansas, and we have the Family Nutrition Program in
14 almost all of them. I think there's a few that don't have
15 the program. But it's been wonderful.

16 And I listen to their -- I go to their annual
17 meeting, and I listen to their testimonials, and it's just a
18 wonderful program. So that does need to be continued.

19 And the last thing I'll say before I finish is,
20 please, please fight all efforts -- and I know USDA has to
21 this point. Do not let Congress Block Grant the Food Stamp
22 Program. Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Pam. Mildred Williams.

25 MS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. I'm Mildred

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1 Williams from Mother to Mother Ministry of Kansas City,
2 Kansas. And we reach clients who are low income mothers and
3 their families in all of Wyandotte County.

4 And some of the things that I hear from them is
5 that the process is just so cumbersome, there's so much
6 paperwork to fill out.

7 And for our mothers who are working mothers, they
8 do not normally work in Wyandotte County. They work in
9 Jackson County or Johnson County.

10 And they have to get their kids to child care
11 before they go to work, and then they have to pick them up
12 by a deadline before they can do anything. And it's very
13 hard for them to get to the SRS office to fill out the paper
14 during that time.

15 And everybody says, Oh, well, you can miss a day
16 of work. Well, you know, they don't work for the Federal
17 Government, and they don't work for big corporations. They
18 miss a day of work, they could get fired.

19 So that's some things to think about. I wish you
20 had a process where you had a simple two-page form they
21 could fill out, and you could mail it in. And you could
22 reduce the amount of reporting back and forth to relieve
23 some of the stress.

24 I understand your concern about fraud, that
25 people do commit fraud. But somehow there needs to be a

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1 more people friendly way of issuing food stamps to people.

2 And the issue of eliminating the barrier to
3 having a car is very important to people in Wyandotte County
4 because of the transportation problem, the public
5 transportation problem. If they have a car, they need it to
6 get back and forth to work. They need it to get the kids to
7 day care.

8 So these are the two main issues that the mothers
9 in our program wanted me to say to you. And they wanted to
10 say, Thank you for the program.

11 MS. PARADIS: Mildred, thank you very much.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. PARADIS: And I understand we have a
14 telephone caller who would like to offer some comments.

15 Caller, if you're there, could you please give us
16 your name and tell us where you're from? And then we'd be
17 pleased to hear your comments.

18 VOICE: [Inaudible] And I work for the State,
19 headquartered in Cheyenne.

20 And I guess the input I have would be that most
21 of the individuals that we have have guardians that we deal
22 with. Sometimes the guardians have a difficult time with
23 the process and have to have case managers help them
24 understand the application.

25 For instance, you know, as far as being user

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1 friendly, there aren't a lot of pictures, not a lot of
2 demonstrations.

3 Some of the guardians are low income,
4 [inaudible], and they have to have help to even get through
5 the application.

6 [Inaudible]. And it should be presented in a way
7 that they can understand without having had a lot of visits.

8 [Inaudible]. Thank you.

9 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Rosie, very much. I
10 appreciate you calling in.

11 Our next presenter is Carol Smith.

12 MS. SMITH: Good afternoon. I'm Carol Smith.
13 I'm the research director with United Community Services of
14 Johnson County, which is a suburban county of the Kansas
15 City area here. We're a human service planning organization
16 with a 30-year history in our community.

17 One of the things that we've done since '96 is
18 monitor the implementation of Welfare Reform and the trends
19 that affect it.

20 I'm opening with something I know that you
21 already know and that the evidence is clear that Federal
22 Welfare Reform has negatively impacted the usage of the Food
23 Stamp Program.

24 In Kansas between '96 and '98 food stamp
25 participation declined by nearly one in three. That decline

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1 was only steeper for the states of Wisconsin, Texas, and
2 Arizona.

3 Yet at the same time, during those same years,
4 participation in the reduced and free school lunch program
5 remained essentially the same. That fact seems to suggest
6 that the number of families at risk for hunger had not
7 changed during those periods.

8 Our agency administers a survey for the United
9 Way Association of Kansas and the Kansas Action for
10 Children. That was statewide at emergency assistance sites
11 in 1998 and 1999.

12 And the 1999 survey found that roughly one out of
13 four of those households that turned to emergency assistance
14 sites reported that at least one or more family members went
15 without food in the last 30 days.

16 To demonstrate that food stamps made a difference
17 for the households that had been receiving food stamps and
18 Temporary Assistance for Families who left the Food Stamp
19 Program -- or who left both of those.

20 Where they left Temporary Assistance for Families
21 but continued food stamps, only 17 percent reported going
22 without food in the past month. So clearly it does make a
23 difference for those fragile families.

24 I have some written testimony. This is not in
25 the written testimony.

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1 About two out of five of those households
2 reported that they were turning to food banks more often.

3 In my county, in Johnson County, over half, 55
4 percent, reported that they were turning to food banks more
5 often. So there's a need out there.

6 Clearly the advent of work-based Welfare Reform
7 challenges all of us to think about new ways to design
8 programs.

9 And in the little time I've been here, I know
10 you've been hearing a lot about what can we do to make
11 things more family friendly for working families?

12 I saw -- and I know this is something you
13 probably know, because it's a quote from a United States
14 Department of Agriculture study that found that the average
15 application process required nearly five hours of time, two
16 trips to the Food Stamp certification office, and \$10 of
17 out-of-pocket expenses.

18 Let's do look for the models to try and simplify
19 and make that easier. I think models exist. One might look
20 at some of the other programs that are successfully working
21 for lower income working families.

22 One of those is the Children's Health Insurance
23 Program with its continuous eligibility, with its
24 application through the mail. Another is the Federal Earned
25 Income Tax Credit.

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1 And both of these programs operate with a limited
2 amount of stigma, something else that we need to take very
3 seriously and a characteristic of both.

4 Another one is the School Lunch Program which
5 operates with very little stigma.

6 Both the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Food
7 Stamp Program, one of their key characteristics is that they
8 do not require a visit to a social welfare office.

9 People have already hit the car issue, but I've
10 got to hit the car issue; it's just so integral. Somebody
11 has already commented about our lack of public
12 transportation in Johnson County.

13 I spoke with one mother. She said if you wanted
14 to get to work the next morning, you would have to leave the
15 night before in Johnson County to get there by public
16 transportation.

17 Next I have some specific rules to be looked at.
18 And I just wanted to -- someone else here from a State
19 agency, and I believe it was from SRS, commented on the good
20 workers.

21 This is why I called my SRS staff, because I know
22 there's really very committed people who stumble over the
23 barriers that are in the policies, and asked them, What do
24 you think are some of the significant barriers in the Food
25 Stamp rules that need to be changed to help the families

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1 that really need the help?

2 One of the ones is to help those families making
3 the transition from Welfare to work. Currently, for
4 example, the Medicaid law does not require monthly income
5 reporting for 12 months. Food Stamps apparently does, and
6 that caseworker and I would agree that Food Stamps should
7 parallel Medicaid in not requiring that.

8 It would aid families during that critical time.
9 They're so thrilled to have a job and so thrilled to think
10 that they're pursuing self-sufficiency, but it's still a
11 very fragile time.

12 And we well know that -- I think last year in
13 Kansas it was finally up to 6-something, 6.72 an hour is the
14 average wage. We know that's still, for most families,
15 below the poverty level. And they need that Food Stamps
16 assistance to help retain jobs, to make that transition.

17 Another specific rule that I was told about
18 affects how student status affects the Food Stamps
19 eligibility. As I just said, one of the documented facts of
20 Welfare Reform is that people leave for poverty level wages
21 and then, despite years of work, often they remain at
22 poverty level wages.

23 If you have working poor parents that are willing
24 to pursue education and training for job advancement, they
25 shouldn't be punished by having their access to food stamps

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1 limited for pursuing that education or training.

2 Another requirement is that adult children ages
3 18 to 22 cannot be considered separately for food stamps
4 while they're living with their parents.

5 I really encourage you to actively consider that.
6 I mean, obviously you can imagine situations where that
7 would be abused.

8 On the other hand, if the parent they're trying
9 to live with is somebody who is only making \$8 and they're
10 trying to help that young single parent pursue self-
11 sufficiency, we're only creating more obstacles by then
12 making that young parent move out and try to also deal with
13 the costs of housing.

14 So those are my thoughts. Again, thank you very
15 much for creating this opportunity for communities to
16 express their concern. We know that all citizens of the
17 community are negatively impacted by hunger.

18 And thank you for listening so attentively all
19 afternoon. Thank you.

20 MS. PARADIS: Thank you, Carol.

21 Carol was the last speaker that has registered to
22 present this afternoon.

23 But what we'd like to do is sort of open the mic
24 to anyone who has either presented already and has something
25 additional to share with us or anyone who hasn't signed up

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1 but might be motivated at this point to share some thoughts
2 with us.

3 So is there anyone else in the audience who would
4 like to take the mic? Yes. Come on down.

5 MR. TAYLOR: Yes. I was thinking, on the
6 original issuance of --

7 MS. PARADIS: I'll tell you what. Just for the
8 transcriber and for the rest of us, why don't you give us
9 once again your name and who you're with?

10 MR. TAYLOR: John Taylor. I work for Division of
11 Family Services in Missouri. I'm an adult worker.

12 The first issuance of an EBT card takes a week to
13 get. At that point in time, we direct our clients or
14 customers to a pantry in order to get something to hold them
15 over till they get their card.

16 If there would be some way of maybe issuing
17 credits to the pantry, seeing as how we're taking the needed
18 food from the people who don't qualify for the food
19 stamps -- the borderline, transitional cases getting help
20 from the pantries -- taking that food for qualified clients
21 who are expedited but still have to wait for a card.

22 Maybe somewhere along those lines you can have
23 some vouchers for that one-week period or something along
24 the lines that might kick that food back into the pantry to
25 where the people that don't qualify can use that.

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1 MS. PARADIS: Great. Thanks, John. Anyone else?

2 (No response.)

3 MS. PARADIS: Well, let me just thank you all for
4 the commitment that you have made today, all of you who
5 stayed right through for the last several hours with us to
6 hear all of the comments.

7 I can't tell you how moved I am. We had over 50
8 people comment today.

9 And I think we're all agreed that this is a truly
10 wonderful program, but one that is in need of a serious
11 overhaul. And that's what we are about.

12 And you know, I've thought so often we work with
13 some absolutely wonderful folks inside the Beltway who know
14 what you're about and are in contact with you and try to
15 share with us your various comments.

16 But human nature being what it is and the nature
17 of their job being what it is, too often I think that there
18 is a filter between what you all are realizing and sometimes
19 what we hear.

20 And so it's wonderful for us to get out and
21 really hear from recipients, from poor moms, from people who
22 work with poor families every single day so we have a truly
23 more personal sense of exactly where the needs are and what
24 needs to be changed.

25 You've contributed today to a truly powerful

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1 record. And the fact that we're doing seven of these
2 suggests that we're going to have literally hundreds of
3 comments and recommendations from people I call real people.

4 And that's going to be of great assistance to us
5 as we sort of try to provide some leadership as
6 reauthorization is upon us.

7 And this is just the first step, it truly is.
8 When we get finished, at the end of August, we're going to
9 take a couple of weeks to at least put together some kind of
10 a summary to sort of try to capture a lot of the themes so
11 that there will be a public record.

12 I did mention before we started and you should
13 know that the transcriptions of each of these will be
14 available at the Food and Nutrition Service Web page so that
15 you will have that actual record.

16 And then, I would urge you to continue this
17 discussion among yourselves and with others over the next
18 several months and into next year, because I think this is
19 an evolutionary process.

20 We've had a lot of recommendations already from
21 the first four sessions. Clearly we're not going to be able
22 to do everything that was suggested.

23 And so there's going to be a need to sort of sift
24 and evaluate and take a look at all of this before we can
25 come up with some concrete and significant proposals.

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1 And so please keep in mind that you're going to
2 be called upon, and we're going to appreciate all of your
3 comments and recommendations as we continue through this
4 process.

5 So once again let me thank you for taking part
6 today. We look forward to working with you. And we will be
7 delighted to get any of your comments.

8 The public record will stay open until the end of
9 this month. But at any time over the next several months
10 and into the next year, if you have anything you want to
11 share with us, we would be delighted to hear it.

12 And let me thank the Community College once again
13 for helping us with this space, and Bill and your staff for
14 setting it up. I think it went extraordinarily well.

15 Thank you, Sam, for helping us today to hear all
16 of these comments.

17 Some of us at least will stay for some period of
18 time, since people do think that we're going to be here
19 until 7:00. So in case there would be others who would want
20 to come and share or callers that may be calling in, we'll
21 stay here at least for a while, some of us. So we do know
22 that.

23 If any of you know of others who are going to
24 come and will be coming, that would be great if you could
25 let them know if they came sooner rather than later it would

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1 help us out a great deal.

2 Thank you very much, and continue all your
3 wonderful work with America's poor families.

4 (Applause.)

5 (Whereupon, at 4:40 p.m., the meeting was
6 adjourned.)

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E

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3 IN RE: MEETING FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

4 FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

5

6 LOCATION: Kansas City, Missouri

7

8 DATE: August 3, 2000

9

10 I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages,
11 numbers 1 through 148, inclusive, are the true, accurate, and
12 complete transcript prepared from the verbal recording made
13 by electronic recording by Phyllis Lund before the U.S.
14 Department of Agriculture.

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21 8/3/00

22 Phyllis Lund

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